



Global Lessons on Managing Executive Transitions

National Democratic Institute (NDI)





NATIONAL
DEMOCRATIC
INSTITUTE

Global Lessons on Managing Executive Transitions

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**National Endowment
for Democracy**

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The *Global Lessons on Managing Executive Transitions* guide is a product of the National Democratic Institute (NDI or the Institute). This resource is the culmination of the hard work, expertise and insight of many, including NDI's vast network of global partners and stakeholders, whose experiences in transitions shaped the foundation and impetus for this resource.

This guide was conceptualized based on the work of NDI's Democratic Governance team, which for years has worked with partners globally to support smooth leadership transitions following democratic elections.

This resource would not have been possible without the expert contributions of **Monique Smith**, former Member of Provincial Parliament, Minister and Government House Leader of Ontario, Canada, who supported the transitions of various government officials and led the transition team for the Premier of Ontario in 2012. Monique developed the guide's chapter on *parliamentary transitions*. **Todd Rosenblum**, former Principal Deputy/Acting Assistant Secretary of Defense and member of President Barack Obama's transition team. Todd developed the guide's chapter on *presidential transitions*. **Heather Bourbeau**, communications expert and former Political Affairs Officer with the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL). Heather is a current consultant to various UN agencies. Heather developed the guide's chapter on *post-conflict transitions*. The guide's overall development was spearheaded by **Frieda Arenos**, Program Director and technical lead on NDI's executive transitions program.

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ABOUT THE NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTE

The National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI or the Institute) is a non-profit, nonpartisan, nongovernmental organization that responds to the aspirations of people around the world to live in democratic societies that recognize and promote basic human rights. Since its founding in 1983, NDI and its local partners have worked to support and strengthen democratic institutions and practices by strengthening political parties, civic organizations and parliaments; safeguarding elections; and promoting citizen participation, openness and accountability in government.

Since the early 2000s, NDI has been working with partners globally to support smooth transitions and executive office development. Specifically, the Institute has worked with hundreds of campaigns, parties, government officials, leaders and civil society organizations to support not only smooth processes in the assumption of leadership, but also an empowered civil society capable of motivating and holding accountable a smooth process. In 2016, NDI was awarded generous support from the National Endowment for Democracy to develop resources and a community of practice to showcase the education and experience gained from work on transitions, and of which served as the benchmark for this guide.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

An executive transition signals the transfer of power from one leader and administration to another. Ensuring this process is peaceful and smooth is paramount to citizen and national security, and the continuance of democratic governance.

Executive transitions occur in different political systems and geographic contexts, and may involve the shift between different leaders, or from an incumbent leader to their next term. Transitions occur following a democratic election, peace deal, or as a result of a government's vote of no confidence in leadership, and in many other scenarios. Despite the reason for the shift, there are several critical processes that candidates, leaders and their governments can use to ensure the process is smooth in the pre- and post-election and post-inaugural periods. A smooth transition is critical to ensuring a leader can quickly and effectively assume leadership power and deliver concrete government action on behalf of the citizenry.

This guide is designed to provide an overview of these various processes from the perspective of different political systems and contexts — presidential, parliamentary, semi-presidential and post-conflict. In each of these systems, transition processes may differ as a result of rule of law, legal precedent, tradition and the overall political environment. Further, the nature of transition is highly subject to ongoing political events in the country or broader region, in addition to other global conditions outside of control (i.e., natural disasters, pandemics, conflict, etc.). Global experiences also shed light on the role of good practices, such as preparations and training for political and civil service staff, developing internal coordination infrastructure and strengthening external communications and engagement between the leader and the public — in facilitating a successful transition process regardless of the political structure and context.



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Cabinet: The executive leadership of the government, consisting of officials appointed by the leader.

Cabinet solidarity: In a parliamentary system, the principle that decisions of the cabinet must be supported by all of its members; by convention, those not supporting a decision must resign from the Cabinet.

Caretaker period (or convention): Period of time between shifts in administrations where the civil service outlines protocols for events during and immediately post-election; these protocols are referred to as the 'caretaker convention.'

Caucus: Members of the elected legislative body belonging to the same political party, sometimes together with their counterparts in a different chamber, are collectively referred to as that party's caucus.

Caucus meeting: The closed meeting of the parliamentary members of a political party.

Civil service (or public service): The body comprised of career government employees, ranging from entry level to senior, who are apolitical subject matter experts sworn to serve executives and political appointees equally, regardless of party affiliation. They typically remain in government to support successive executives.

Classified information: Information a government controls that is not releasable to the public. Effective control of classified information includes having tiers of sensitivity of the information, standards for access, release and storage. Much national security information, for example, is classified.

Coalition: A coalition refers to a situation where two or more parties join together to form a collective party authority in government under a negotiated policy agenda and agreement. There are many reasons parties may choose to form a coalition, including as a result of mandates by a nation's constitution, or in the event no single party has a clear working majority following a general election.

Confidence: The support of more than half the members of the legislature for a government, which may be shown by voting on a particular major issue or for the executive in power.

Constituent assembly (or constitutional assembly): A group formed during a constitutional reformation process to adopt a constitution by inclusive engagement with government actors and members of the public.

Continuity in government: Plans, processes, capabilities and procedures for ensuring governments have the means to maintain operations during transitions, or events that impact the health and security of a nation and its senior leaders. Readiness includes succession planning, government relocation preparedness and ensuring government documents and communications are survivable.

Dissolution: The official term for the end of a parliament before a general election. When parliament is dissolved, every seat in the legislature becomes vacant. Members of parliament immediately revert to being members of the general public, and those who wish to become members again must stand for election as candidates.



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The executive: In this document, the executive means the elected (or appointed) leader of a nation, who serves as ultimate overseer of government and/or parliament depending on political context. Common terms for the executive include: *president, prime minister, head of government, chairman of the government, president of the council of ministers, premier, chief minister, minister-president, governor, chancellor, excellency, right honourable, Grand Vizier (Pakistan), and Taoiseach (Ireland)*.

Executive: In some jurisdictions this term is used to describe the branch of government which controls departments, agencies, and ministries and carries out or administers laws. Also referred to as the administration.

Executive orders: Directives issued by a president that establish official executive branch policy. They may carry the weight of law but are not permanent or validated by the legislative branch. Executive Orders (E.O.s) do not supersede law and can be rescinded by the next president.

Executive secretariat: Coordinating bodies in an office of the executive and in all government ministries, departments and agencies designed to receive taskings, issue lead and coordinating response assignments, track for timeliness, completeness and format and submit taskings to senior leaders or requesting government entities.

Government: The government runs the country and has a responsibility in developing and implementing policy. It is also known as the **executive**. Government departments (ministries) and their agencies are responsible for putting government policy into practice.

Government assets: Property and services funded by the government and used for official purposes only. Government assets are issued to political and career government officials and must be returned when a person is no longer in government service. Government assets range from official residences, vehicles, computers, phones and office supplies.

Head of civil service: In some systems, also known as *secretary general, cabinet secretary, minister of state*, this individual's role is to be the most senior civil service adviser to the executive. Their formal role is to support and advise on the running of cabinet and cabinet committees, and to support the government in reaching a collective agreement on policies. In parliamentary systems, they often act as one of the prime minister's senior advisers on the working of government and on major policy decisions. They also work very closely with the most senior ministers in government, advising the prime minister on priority issues and ensuring that the rest of the civil service works to deliver those priorities.

Inaugural address: A speech normally delivered by the executive at the opening of a session of parliament, which outlines the government's legislative plans for the session.

Inauguration Day: The day at which the next leader is sworn into office and assumes control of government.

Judicial branch: An independent branch of government that adjudicates questions about the appropriate scope and application of law.

Landing teams: A group within the presidential transition team that arrives at an agency or department following an election to gather relevant information related to agency and policy review, which helps the president-elect gather input and information to craft a policy agenda and plan for their first 100 days in office.



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Legal frameworks: Binding laws that define specific transition rules, intent and requirements.

Legislative session: The period of time a legislature meets until it breaks for recess.

Mandate letters: A letter sent by a prime minister or head of government to a minister that outlines the leader's policy directives, in addition to other critical areas of focus. The letter may be made public in order to share policy initiatives for public awareness and input.

Member of parliament (MP): A person elected to serve in the legislature under a specific party, jurisdiction or constituency.

Minister: An individual who oversees the actions and operations of an individual ministry (or department or agency). This person is typically appointed by the executive, and in some political systems, confirmed by the legislature.

Ministry (or departments/agencies): The major arms of government that plan, coordinate and execute government operations in their area of responsibility. Ministries are overseen by ministers who report to the executive.

Office of the president: The administrative and policy staff that works for the president and establishes presidential intent and priorities for the administration as a whole.

Outgoing administration: The current president who controls governmental decision-making during the period of campaign season, affirmation of the president-elect and through the inauguration that transfers governing authority to the next president.

Parliament: The legislative branch of government. A parliament can be unicameral or bicameral depending on a nation's rule of law. Parliament's main functions are to conduct debates, to make and change legislation (laws) and to check the work of government.

Political appointees: Persons who are appointed by an executive to serve in government at the pleasure of the leader, and who typically depart at the end of the leader's term. Ranging from ministers and secretaries to advisors, officers and junior assistants, they typically work in the executive mansion or ministries of government.

Political party: A group of people sharing a particular interest and set of goals in the political sphere.

Portfolio: The responsibilities of a cabinet minister, especially the subject matter or government department or agency with which they are charged.

President-elect: The person certified to have won the presidential election, but not yet sworn into office as governing president. This person will qualify for extensive transition support and information.

Prime minister: The leader of the government who is ordinarily the leader of the party having the greatest number of seats in the legislature or the leader of a coalition. In some jurisdictions formally appointed by the head of state, the prime minister selects the other members of the cabinet and, along with them, is responsible to the legislature for the administration of public affairs. In some systems, a prime minister is also known as the following titles: *chairman of government, president of the government, president of the executive council, minister-president, chancellor, minister of state, secretary of state, excellency, right honourable, head of parliament, grand vizier (Pakistan)*.



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Qualified candidates: Persons certified under national election laws as having enough support to merit access to basic outgoing administration transition materials.

Shadow cabinet: The group of members in each opposition party, especially the official opposition, chosen to mirror the cabinet in government. Each member of the shadow cabinet is appointed to lead on a specific policy area for their party and to question and challenge their counterpart in the cabinet. In this way, the official opposition seeks to present itself as an alternative government-in-waiting.

Swearing-in: The swearing-in is the process of making an oath, or a solemn affirmation, of allegiance to become the certified leader of a country.

Transition plan: In this document, the transition plan is the document prepared by the transition team to review with the incoming executive as soon as they are determined to be elected the leader of the new government. Prior to the election, the transition team will be consulting with the leader to ensure that as soon as the election is called (or a coalition is formed) the plan for the smooth transfer of power is prepared to be implemented.

Transition teams: Persons serving in temporary roles to support and assist the separate incoming and outgoing administrations preparing to enter and depart government. Incoming and outgoing transition teams play different roles and functions but should work collaboratively.



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The National Democratic Institute Executive Transitions Program:

For more than three decades, the National Democratic Institute's (NDI's) programming on democratic governance has focused on advancing effective, inclusive and open government institutions. Government offices, ministries and elected bodies must be responsive to citizens' needs and create opportunities for participatory processes at all levels. Smooth leadership transitions are critical to this effort.

Since the early 2000s, NDI has worked with stakeholders across the globe, including government leaders, officials, civil service and political staff, parties, transition teams, civil society organizations, academics and experts to support smooth transitions following democratic elections. The Institute has worked with campaign leaders and transition parties in Afghanistan to raise awareness on the importance of a smooth transition; with transition teams, political and civil service staff in Liberia to develop internal coordination and strategic communications infrastructure; with leaders in Tanzania and The Gambia to strengthen technology and communications; with leaders and staff in Kosovo and Sudan to establish functional executive offices and ministries; with peers in Cabo Verde to train senior executive staff; with Nigerian legislators to develop legal frameworks codifying transition processes in law; and with civil society organizations across Latin America to empower public engagement in transition accountability and transparency.

In 2016, the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) provided pivotal funding for the Institute to develop a global knowledge hub on transition expertise, in addition to resources exemplifying that education and experience. The culmination of these efforts resulted in several high-level convenings between global leaders and officials in 2016 and 2018, in addition to the development of a global *Transitions Community of Practice* and *Executive Chiefs of Staff Network* focused on providing peer-to-peer support and guidance by and for officials experiencing or managing transitions. NDI also developed the *Transitions of Power* website resource center to house a global set of resources on transitions, given few databases exist that offer guidance on transitions from across the globe.

Throughout the course of its programming, NDI has developed close partnerships with several organizations experienced in transition process and practice globally, including the [White House Transition Project](#), the [Global Leadership Foundation](#), the [Center for Presidential Transition](#) at the Partnership for Public Service, [Save Democracy Africa](#), the [Center for Democratic Development](#) in Ghana, the [George W. Bush Institute](#), the [International Republican Institute](#), and others. NDI's work with these partners has resulted in extensive global insight and expertise on transition best practices, in addition to peer networks to support transition actors internationally.

This guide is the next step in the cultivation of international knowledge on transition good practices, and is intended to provide stakeholders managing executive transitions with lessons from peers and experts to advance smooth processes. The overview of guidance provided in this resource was designed as a result of requests received directly from stakeholders involved in transitions, in addition to experiences faced by former officials and other relevant transition actors. It is intended to support leaders, officials, civil service and political staff, consultants and international assistance partners in executing or supporting smooth transition processes following democratic elections. The resource is not intended to offer an exhaustive overview of transition processes globally, but rather highlight a limited number of illustrative examples from a diverse set of countries and regions.



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What is an executive transition?

Executive transitions mark the passage of power from one leader or administration to another. They can occur at all levels of government — national, legislative, subnational — and between new or incumbent leaders and their governments. Transitions occur in all political systems and contexts. Though typically driven by the circumstances of an election or the political environment and context, successful transitions globally share several common elements, including steps taken by leaders and their teams to staff up, coordinate and communicate internally and externally with the public. In democracies, an executive transition underscores the core tenet of government for and by the people. It represents a government's commitment to respect the people's will in electing their next leader.

Why is a smooth transition important?

A smooth executive transition is the cornerstone of the democratic process. Transitions signal not only the will of the people in choosing their leader, but also that no single individual should have a monopoly on power in a democratic system. Smooth transitions ensure the ability of a government to continue delivering public resources and services, and to maintain national security despite shifts at the helm of government. They mark a moment when candidates turned leaders-elect turned leaders may capitalize on the momentum created by an election in order to move from a mode of campaigning to governing and in order to begin fulfilling promises for reform. In especially fragile countries, a smooth transition is pivotal in the process of democratic consolidation, as it marks a government's commitment to respect the results of a free and fair election, and preserve institutional capacity and service delivery for and by the people.

Above all, ensuring transitions are peaceful and smooth has immense benefits to incoming, outgoing, and incumbent leaders alike, in addition to the government and citizenry writ large:

- ◆ **A SMOOTH TRANSITION HELPS AVOID COSTLY MISTAKES.** Transitions influence prospects for a strong start. They help avert wasted time walking back an action that could have been avoided. Managing appointments and staffing is especially important, as it sets the tone for how a new executive works with others and will tackle policy issues.
- ◆ **TAKING ADVANTAGE OF GOODWILL.** Goodwill exists at the beginning of a new administration, as people are often united with the hope the leader will uphold promises made for reform during the campaign. Transitions use the momentum of this goodwill to allow the leader a period of time to establish leadership priorities, and begin to communicate and act on those priorities. Political headwinds tend to increase as time moves on.
- ◆ **ESTABLISHING CONTINUITY IN GOVERNMENT.** A good transition can provide societal stability and continuity in government. When people vote for change, they want to know that their government will offer stability and continuity through accepted constitutional and legal processes.
- ◆ **MOVING FROM CANDIDATE TO LEADER.** Transitions signify the move of a leader from political candidate to leader of all people. During this period, the leader-elect can benefit from widening their perspective from those who supported them during the campaign, to being a leader for all. Smooth transitions allow this process to happen symbolically, especially if the leader-elect reaches across the aisle during this time.
- ◆ **DIRECTION AND FOLLOW THROUGH FROM THE CAMPAIGN.** Those voting for the leader-elect did so expecting them to carry through on certain core commitments. Even if these commitments are going to be difficult to achieve — such as eradicating poverty — the public wants to know there is a plan to tackle the issues. People are more likely to wait for change if they believe action is underway. Early planning with priorities in place has the additional benefit that there is something to fall back on if things go wrong. A leader can get out of trouble more quickly if there is a positive and strategic plan.



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- ◆ **QUALITY OF INFORMATION.** Establishing effective information-sharing processes facilitates interagency coordination and improves response capability to unexpected situations.
- ◆ **EFFECTIVE WORKING RELATIONSHIPS.** A transition gives the incoming leader the opportunity to establish good relationships with governmental institutions and partners. A smooth transition also allows the new leader to take advantage of the expertise and experience of those who are leaving office. For example, if the previous administration had strong relationships with foreign governments and international institutions, working with the outgoing administration to understand these relationships will help maintain strong global ties.
- ◆ **LEADERSHIP REPUTATION.** In the early days, the new leader can cultivate a positive image through effective communication, working across party lines and strengthening international relationships. Developing a positive reputation early provides political capital for the new leader and is helpful when crises arise.
- ◆ **DELIVERING ON CAMPAIGN PROMISES THROUGH GOVERNMENT ACTION.** The staffing process, including executive leadership staff, political appointees and civil service leads are critical to the government's capacity to deliver. Sound management is important to getting the most out of resources. This means getting key executive office leadership staff in addition to critical cabinet or minister positions in place early so that the government can get down to the business of translating campaign promises into governing priorities and timelines. Bringing on experienced advisers from the beginning will help navigate political complexities and avoid costly mistakes.
- ◆ **CREATING A POSITIVE LEGACY.** At the beginning, no leader has all the skills and experience required to operate the executive office. A strong transition can help the leader identify areas where they can build on the expertise and experience of others in order to be an effective leader that people look up to and are motivated by throughout their time in office and long after they leave.¹

How are transitions managed across global contexts?

Many countries have traditions and practices that drive their leadership transitions. Others have specific legal frameworks, whether embedded in a constitution or other policies, that shape specific terms and responsibilities of those involved. In many cases, a country's rule of law determines the basic processes and mechanics under which a transition occurs. For example, in presidential systems, official candidates often begin transition planning several months before Election Day, whereas in parliamentary systems, there is often less time for a candidate to prepare for the shift. In semi-presidential systems, a transition may occur in both the executive and parliament at the same time or at different times. In a coalition government, a transition may simply involve negotiations between party leaders following an election, or take several rounds of negotiations and elections to form a government. In transitions resulting from a brokered peace deal following prolonged conflict, international assistance partners or peacekeeping operations may support a mandated process over the course of several years.

Transition experts and stakeholders largely agree regarding the good practices across contexts that advance overall success. Such elements include: making plans before or shortly after an election for a leader's actions in their first days, weeks and months in office, including for staffing of political/civil service; establishing standard protocols for inter-office coordination and workflow upon assumption of leadership; developing consistent and coordinated external communications operations through a dedicated, professional and robust communications team across government; and over time, working to establish national legal precedents for transition processes to ensure continuity and sustainability in all future transitions of leadership power.

¹ This list of transition benefits was originally created by White House Transition Project executive director, Martha Joynt Kumar; this adapted version was developed with support from Frieda Arenos, NDI.



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Understanding the components of an effective handover of executive power begins with an understanding of the nature or kind of transition taking place. Transition experiences can vary widely along several dimensions, including:

- ◆ **TYPE OF SYSTEM.** Transition practices vary widely among presidential, parliamentary and hybrid forms of government. In parliamentary systems, a transition can occur quickly from one leader of the governing coalition to the next; for example, upon the resignation of the prime minister. In presidential systems, there is typically a developed or set schedule for a transition, pursuant to periodic elections; transitions outside of elections due to the death, resignation or removal of a president would typically be to the vice president who has been part of the previous administration. Hybrid systems have both presidential and prime ministerial transitions, each with their own dynamics.
- ◆ **LENGTH OF THE TRANSITION PERIOD.** Regardless of the type of political system, there is more opportunity for preparation in contexts where the timing of a transition is known in advance. For example, in the U.S., given the nature of the presidential and the two-party system, transition planning for the leading candidates begins well before the elections. In the context of snap elections in parliamentary systems, the civil service may have just a few weeks to prepare for a transfer of power.
- ◆ **MAJORITY/MINORITY/COALITION GOVERNMENT.** Transition dynamics depend on whether the incoming government has an outright majority, is a minority government or governs as part of a coalition. Dynamics further vary depending on the size and structure of the coalition, e.g., whether the parties were in an electoral coalition, whether they have previously governed together as part of a coalition and a host of other factors. In a presidential system, the size of the incoming administration's majority (if one exists) will also impact the practicalities of the transition, e.g., how quickly the cabinet may be confirmed and the level of ambitions of the incoming administration.
- ◆ **LEGAL FRAMEWORK OR RESPECTED PRECEDENT REGARDING TRANSITION PROCESSES.** Legal and normative frameworks support the success of a transition. In long-established democracies, certain mechanics related to the transition process may rely on precedent, rather than law. In newer democracies, some of these traditions and precedents may be less developed. Transition legal frameworks often set timelines, resources, and guidelines for actors and tools involved in the process, all of which support the ability of actors to effectively plan for and execute the transition. The existence of legally codified processes can reduce potential for conflict regarding the rules of the transition.
- ◆ **EXISTENCE OF A NON-PARTISAN CIVIL SERVICE.** A non-partisan, professional civil service is critical in upholding institutional memory of government and supporting the foundation for strong governance despite shifts in partisan affiliation or leadership priorities. A neutral civil service can ensure continuity in government by ensuring government programs and regulations stand, despite shifts in leadership decisions and party priorities.

How to use this resource?

This resource was designed to provide a broad overview of transition mechanics in different political systems and contexts, while also recognizing that there are common “good practices” that advance smooth transitions across different systems and environments. Because many countries engage in less formally known or publicized practices in the process of transitioning power, this resource cannot claim to provide a truly global scope of examples, as examples are not showcased from every country.

The resource is broken into three major sections, which encapsulate guidance on good practices for transitions in those systems and contexts.



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- ◆ **PARLIAMENTARY (SECTION I):** Provides an overview of transition mechanics in traditional parliamentary systems, focused especially on the election of a new leader and subsequent forming of a new government by the majority. This section also includes brief subsections on coalition and semi-presidential transitions.
- ◆ **PRESIDENTIAL (SECTION II):** Outlines transition mechanics in traditional presidential systems, focused on steps to take for incoming and outgoing leaders in the preand post-election and post-inaugural months.
- ◆ **POST-CONFLICT (SECTION III):** Offers an overview of the specific mechanics of a country transitioning from prolonged conflict to democracy, specifically for those preparing for leadership appointment or election following the brokerage of a peace deal, cease-fire, or in states of protracted conflict.

This resource is intended for use by *candidates, incoming and outgoing leaders, political and civil service staff, transition team staff, experts, academics, civil society organizations and international assistance partners*, to support and enhance successful transition processes.

Every section includes a summary set of information in terms of recommended processes before, during, and after an election period and into a leader's first months in office. It has been designed for users to toggle between various sections and contexts, or refer simply to one individual political structure at a time.

If you are using this resource and would like to contribute guidance or additional information based on your experience and study, please contact the National Democratic Institute for future versions of this manual, or visit NDI's central website resource center on executive transitions – [Transitions of Power](#).



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◆ SECTION I: PARLIAMENTARY TRANSITIONS ◆

A government transition in a parliamentary system is an exercise of effectively and publicly taking control of government by a political party or coalition of parties. Successful parliamentary transitions include a complex set of processes and mechanisms involving actors and agencies in the incoming and outgoing governments. They also require key actors to prepare quickly to assume the mantle of government and implement a new leader's vision. Further, they require that new leaders and their cabinets understand the roles and responsibilities of government and leadership. This is especially critical when a transition includes leadership and staff with no prior governing experience. To ensure the transition process is successful, it is critical for incoming leaders, and their administrations to engage in preparatory processes. This helps avoid mistakes or mishaps, especially as a new government is busy adjusting to its new role.

In the parliamentary context, key actors include members of the civil service and leaders of public agencies. A key mechanism to a successful process is establishing cooperation and loyalty between those actors. While time-consuming, this is a critical exercise that allows new leaders to assume the mantle of government quickly. This process may also include replacing a number of office holders.

Time is of the essence during a parliamentary transition, because there are typically only a few short weeks following an election where leaders have an opportunity to build on the momentum created by the campaign to address public expectations for reform. In some parliamentary contexts, there is an emphasis on the "first 100 days," or first few months in office where leaders have this opportunity to quickly shift from a candidate to some, to a leader for all. Early transition activity also usually includes the execution of some elements of the political/election platform to demonstrate that commitments made during the election will be implemented.¹

In any transition scenario, an incoming head of state will seek to project an image of competence and leadership. A smooth transition process will set the stage for success for a new government, and provide the necessary political stability for the country from the beginning.

TRANSITION CONTEXTS

In a parliamentary system, a prime minister can enter office in a variety of ways. In the case of the Westminster system,² the prime minister is the leader of the majority party or coalition in parliament. The prime minister therefore remains a *central part* of the legislature with a strong influence in the policymaking process, working directly with members to write and pass legislation, and to ensure the mandate that their party was elected on is fulfilled. Examples of this system include Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Malaysia, India and the United Kingdom.

Also in this system, executive functions are typically exercised by members of the parliament appointed to the cabinet by the prime minister. Prime ministers may be removed from power whenever they lose the confidence of a majority of the ruling party or of the parliament. If a majority of members lose confidence in the ability of the prime minister to govern, the legislature has the right to dismiss a prime minister through a "motion of no confidence." Such as in Italy and Thailand, a head of state appoints a prime minister, who then has a specific amount of time to gain a vote of confidence by parliament. If the prime minister fails to gain a vote of confidence within that period, they along with their entire government must resign. Similarly, in places like Israel, the president appoints a Knesset (or parliament) member to form the government and become prime minister after the election takes place. That Knesset member then has 28 days to form the government and elicit a vote of confidence from the Knesset.³



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In Spain, the head of state nominates a candidate, but must seek the confidence of parliament before this person is formally approved. In constitutional monarchies, such as the United Kingdom, Sweden and Japan, the monarch is advised that the prime minister has lost the confidence of the parliament, and therefore may dissolve the parliament and call an election. The monarch may also ask another leader to put together a new majority and form a government.⁴

In summary, there are various contexts for transition in a parliamentary regime, which can be categorized under the following themes:

- ◆ The election of a new leader of the governing party
- ◆ The election of a new governing party/coalition to power⁵
- ◆ Other circumstances resulting in executive transitions

The election of a new party leader

The election of a new leader of the governing party is considered by some governance experts to be the most complex kind of transition.⁶ There are several political challenges at play during this time, including the relationship and accord between the incoming and outgoing leaders. In these transitions, the new leader will work to achieve the right balance between distancing themselves from the former leader and old regime, and putting their own brand on the “new” government.

A transition that occurs within a party requires the new leader to focus on creating differentiation from the previous leader, to confirm the public’s expectation of change and renewal. The new leader must draft an election platform, which will be presented to the electorate. This is different from the focus of a newly elected leader, fresh from a general election, who is driving the election platform of the government (and leader) that has just been elected.

The election of a new governing party/coalition to power

The majority of this chapter will focus on the transition processes that occur **following the election of a new governing party or coalition to power**. As part of their election readiness, the parties in contention must focus on the processes that happen immediately following the election, as there is always the possibility of a turnover in power with the formation of a new parliamentary majority.

As parties prepare for and engage in the electoral campaign, they may pull together a team to begin considering the many issues facing a new government, *including the structure of office they want to implement, policies and funding needs, and the processes the party will follow if they are successful in winning the election*. This is often difficult to conduct publicly, given political parties are sensitive to any public perception of presuming victory. As such, many political leaders often resist establishing public “transition teams.”⁷

Other circumstances resulting in executive transitions

There are many other situations in the parliamentary context that may result in transitions of power quickly or unexpectedly. For example, in some countries, like Australia and Canada, if the government does not succeed in winning a majority vote for its annual budget or other key legislative initiatives, that is considered a vote of no confidence, and an election may be initiated. In other cases, such as in India, the prime minister is appointed by the president if they are presumed to hold a majority of support in parliament, but then must prove this confidence by the majority through a trust vote. The prime minister is then obligated to resign if this trust is not secured.⁸ Conversely, in other countries, such as Bangladesh, the constitution prohibits members voting against their own party through a motion of no confidence.⁹ Still, in places like Israel, where a majority in parliament has lost confidence



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in the government, a vote of no confidence may be initiated. In this context, if the party or coalition leader and subsequent government does not obtain a legislative majority through the vote, that leader and their government must resign.¹⁰

In some cases, like Germany and Albania, a *constructive* vote of no confidence will indicate who is to replace the government if the incumbent leader loses the vote.¹¹ There are also countries, like Spain, where a distinctive “vote of censure” may occur signaling parliament’s condemnation of a leader’s specific actions. In some cases, a vote of no confidence can lead either to the creation of a new government, backed by a new majority in parliament, or to elections in the case a new majority cannot be found. Depending on the circumstances surrounding the vote of no confidence, and the individual party system of government, this kind of transition can be extremely difficult and complex. For example, in Italy, the government requires the support of both chambers of the bi-cameral parliament to pass a vote of no confidence. The process may only be initiated if a certain percentage of members within one chamber decides to do so. Also in Italy, it is possible to initiate a motion of no confidence against a specific minister and/or the entire government.¹²

Such transitional shifts and nuances are most often defined under a country’s constitutional provisions. However, many transition norms — for example, civil service activities in preparation for new leadership following an election (handover notes, policy review, etc.) — are rarely defined in law in parliamentary systems.

The following chart outlines examples of some select transition processes outlined in legal frameworks in parliamentary systems.

Bangladesh: The constitution includes a section on transitional and temporary provisions, including the processes that occur in the event of the dissolution of the legislature, in addition to maintenance of continuity and interim rule should a leader be removed from power.

Canada: Canada’s constitution has little formal guidance on the responsibilities of the prime minister. Instead, their powers, duties, appointments, and terminations are based on traditions developed over time. Additionally, the *Constitution Act, 1867* establishes the Queen’s Privy Council for Canada, to which all federal ministers (among others) are appointed and normally perform executive functions.

India: India’s constitution outlines the formal functions and powers of the prime minister and requires that ministerial candidates be members of parliament (MPs) either from the upper or lower house. Further, in India, there is no parliamentary vote on who forms a government.

Sweden: The Swedish constitution prescribes that if members of government have been removed, they still must remain in government until a new leader and government has gained leadership control.



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TRANSITION FUNDAMENTALS AND KEY ACTORS

In nearly all parliamentary transitions, there are key mechanisms that will support or enhance the leader's ability to gain the confidence of the people in a transition. Some academics classify these elements as the six "P's."¹³

- ◆ **Preparation:** The mechanisms by which transition teams and candidates/leaders-elect prepare for the transition.
- ◆ **Process:** The process by which transition actors prepare for and execute the transition (often guided by legal frameworks or tradition).
- ◆ **Personnel:** The staff supporting the candidate or leader-elect, in addition to those who are appointed to support the new government post swearing-in.
- ◆ **Pressing issues:** Key issues or current events impacting the election and/or transition context, in addition to any crises or emergency scenarios (acute or ongoing) that may require consideration and attention by the candidate or leader-elect.
- ◆ **Policy:** The platform under which the candidate ran the campaign and the policies of which eventually shape their vision and priorities as a leader.
- ◆ **Pitfall:** The common missteps that may occur without proper transition preparation, communications and cohesion among transition players.

While there is no "one-size-fits-all" approach to government transitions in a parliamentary context, given the multitude of variables and very specific cultural and political aspects of any particular jurisdiction, most transitions will include the following elements:

- ◆ Confirming structure of cabinet, government and staffing
- ◆ Appointing ministers
- ◆ Planning for policy briefings and election platform implementation
 - Inaugural address
 - First budget
- ◆ Managing party affairs

Transition teams and key players

In the development of a well-formed transition plan, it is important that from the start the many tasks of the plan are assigned to appropriate people. Specifically, it is wise to have a team that is strictly designated to ensure a smooth transition of government or a transition team. Transition teams refer to those key players designated by candidates to support functions related to a leadership handover. Transition teams are formed in the time leading up to an election and contribute to a candidate or leader-elect's transition requirements and priorities until they are sworn into office and often into their first days, weeks or months of leadership. Transition teams differ in size depending on the candidate. The team will likely encompass very few members of the campaign team, and instead, include short-term volunteers or staff drawn from former political staff or former senior civil servants who understand the mechanics of government.



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Key Players on the Transition Team

Transition lead: The transition team lead is usually an individual recognized as having the candidate's trust and confidence in order to move the planning forward on their behalf. This person will have intimate knowledge of the party's election platform, and typically be someone completely dedicated to the transition with no intentions or plans to become a part of the executive office.¹⁴

Chief of staff: The executive will likely have determined who their permanent chief of staff will be prior to their election. This individual will work closely with the transition lead to ensure there is consistency in transition processes and the overall vision of the candidate or leader-elect. The chief of staff will be at the executive's side during most of the transition, and will be integrally involved in all major decisions. The chief of staff may come with the executive from a previous office, may have emerged as the right candidate for the role during the campaign, or may have been suggested by the transition team. It is advised that the chief of staff not also be the campaign manager, as running a campaign requires a wholly separate focus and skill set.

Staffing lead: The transition team should include an individual in charge of identifying staff for the incoming executive office. This individual may require support from a small committee. This select group, who may come as volunteers or short-term advisors, are typically those who have previously served as political staff, civil servants or in the private sector, and who have human resource expertise. The staffing lead and committee will seek out and sort through resumes and interview candidates for the various positions that require appointment or hire in the incoming executive's office, and ministers' offices.

Communications lead: Communications is a vital part of the transition process. A transition team's communications lead is essential in managing the messages of the candidate or leader-elect to ensure promises made on the campaign are connected to their actions and statements in the transition. The communications lead will also manage speaking opportunities and engagements with the press until the new executive's communications team is in place.

Transition phases

Transitions in a parliamentary system can take anywhere from a few days or weeks, to several months. For example, in England, the prime minister is sworn in within a day or two of an election, and the real transition work happens after. In Canada, the prime minister and cabinet are sworn in within two or three weeks of the election. In these systems, cabinet selection, staffing and other major decisions happen between election day and the swearing-in.

Typically, a transition in a parliamentary system unfolds in four phases, including:

- ◆ **Phase 1. Pre-election** – For a public transition to roll out as smoothly as possible, a great deal of foundational work should occur prior to the election. A small, discreet group from within each party, specifically those parties that have a chance of forming government, work in the background to plan and set out scenarios to be considered to allow for a smooth transition should their party be successful. This work is done outside of the spotlight so the party is not perceived to be “presumptuous”¹⁵ in planning for victory.
- ◆ **Phase 2. Election period** – In systems where there is a fixed number of days from when an election is officially called to when voting concludes, this period plays an important role in the transition.
- ◆ **Phase 3. Post-election** – In the short period between the election and actually taking over the reins of power, the transition team and the newly elected executive's team work closely to affect a smooth transition. This period is short and includes many major decisions.



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- ◆ **Phase 4. Taking the reins of leadership** – Once the new governing party has taken over the reins of power, the foundational work including the “firsts” of the new administration are crucial in setting up the government for a successful term.

PREPARATIONS IN THE PRE-ELECTION PERIOD

Transition teams

Phase 1 of the transition typically occurs long before the election. Opposition parties in a parliamentary system look to the election as their opportunity to win the majority of electoral districts (or seats), and the mandate to take power and form a government. Most opposition parties will use the vast majority of their sometimes limited resources in pursuit of electing new members and winning a majority; victory is the goal. However, once a leader finds themselves with a majority of elected members, or having formed a coalition of support, they must be prepared to govern – and often very quickly.

A well-prepared transition will provide a new executive with the necessary underpinnings to move to the role of governing with confidence. It can be a minefield to take over a government. Many opposition parties do not have the resources or institutional foundations required to prepare. For some parties, the length of time they have spent in opposition means they have few MPs or staff who have experience in government and as a result lack “institutional memory.”¹⁶ Often, a newly elected government will look to a party faithful who supported other transitions, and who have more recent experience in governing to assist in the transition or in the early stages of the administration.

To prepare for the transition, the leader (governing or in opposition) will appoint an individual to begin planning. This is often done quietly; rarely in the public eye. The chosen individual, often someone outside the office of the leader, is a political veteran, former political staff or former elected official who has the full confidence of the leader. This person will pull together a small group who will begin to meet and draft the foundations of what the new administration should look like.¹⁷ This group, depending on time constraints and the inclination of the leader, will look at a variety of issues including, but not limited to:

- ◆ Structure of government – does the new administration want to add/subtract/merge ministries, departments and/or agencies?
 - Reasons for restructuring –
 - ◇ Priorities of the government
 - ◇ Sending a message
 - ◇ Reducing size of government
 - ◇ Expanding priority areas of government
- ◆ Proposed timelines for swearing-in, inaugural speech to the parliament and budget
- ◆ Proposed cabinet members, preparation of bios and background
- ◆ Proposed members of the executive office staff
- ◆ Draft first press releases for review of leader
- ◆ Coordination of contact with civil service
- ◆ Swearing-in logistics
- ◆ Plan for incoming/outgoing calls, particularly to or from international leaders
- ◆ Outline upcoming national and international events and meetings on the horizon

A well-prepared transition will provide a new executive with the necessary underpinnings to move to the role of governing with confidence.



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This group should **meet regularly in the early days**, and then even more frequently as the election approaches. The transition lead will meet intermittently with the leader and/or their chief of staff to lay the foundation prior to the election period.

Civil service

In many parliamentary systems, the head of the civil service, almost always a non-partisan position, is responsible for the smooth management of the government. The head of the civil service is expected to provide professional, non-partisan advice to the executive based on a thorough analysis of the options available.¹⁸ The civil service takes policy direction from the elected government and is expected to serve whichever party that is successful in the election. While there are exceptions to this, for example in Japan — where the head of the civil service is a political appointee — typically, in the lead up to an election, the head of the civil service will ensure that planning for a smooth transition is a high priority and that whatever the result of the election, the civil service is prepared to serve the new administration and assist it in fulfilling its mandate. The leadership of the civil service will form a small working group in the lead up to the election which will begin the process of planning the transition from the civil service perspective.

Balancing loyalty to the current administration against the need to prepare for the possible arrival of a new administration is both delicate and sensitive. In the UK, for example, the so-called “Douglas-Home Rules” provide that some contact between the head of the civil service and the leader of the official opposition may occur toward the end of a parliament, or when a general election has been called if the executive in office authorizes it.¹⁹ Because the civil service is committed to serve the party that is in power, the doctrine requires that the executive in office provide the head of the civil service permission to meet with the leader of the other political parties. There are limits placed on the timing, number and content of such meetings.²⁰ In Canada, convention dictates that the head of the civil service is available to the leader of the other political party(ies) to provide logistical information or information on the machinery of government and to receive any information the leader of the other political party wishes to share on its party’s plans for government, if they are successful. Due to loyalty of service to the government, the head of the civil service cannot provide policy advice or direction.

With the likely change in the composition of cabinet regardless of who wins the election, the head of the civil service and senior civil servants will begin to prepare transition materials for new ministers that outline the function of the ministry, the structure and the staff, the budgets of the ministry, a list of major stakeholders and the various issues which will need the immediate attention of a new minister.²¹

THE ELECTION PERIOD

Many, although not all, parliamentary systems have a fixed number of days from when an election is officially called to when voting concludes. This period, the election period, is an important part of a parliamentary transition for all involved. The election campaign leading to a change in government is as much about **defining the distinct leadership style of the party leader** as it is about the substance of new ideas and directions of the party and, if successful, the government. There also exists an important linkage between continuity and change.

Transition teams

During the election period, those on the transition team will continue to focus on what will transpire after the election. Depending on the party’s prospects for victory, the transition team’s work will intensify or relax.²² However, given the volatility of many electorates and the increasing



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unpredictability of opinion polling, most parties are well advised to continue their preparations with the view of taking over the government. The transition team will finalize their transition documents, and will complete planning on how to restructure the government. During this time, the party leader typically lacks sufficient time to meet with the head of the civil service. As a result, the transition team or the party leader's chief of staff may meet with the head of transitions to discuss logistics and plans for the election aftermath, regardless of its outcome.²³

Civil service

During the election period, the leadership of the civil service will ideally expand its smaller working group from the pre-election period to include more members of the civil service. These actors will be engaged in the smooth entry of the party that wins the election (whether incumbent or opposition). The circle widens as those members of the civil service engaged in logistics, protocol, communications and others, prepare for the ceremonial aspects of the post-election period. They also prepare to assist new ministers acclimatize to their new positions through transition binders or other memos and handover notes, and assist the incoming executive with whatever needs they might have.

Also during this period, the head of the civil service may issue guidance to the full civil service setting out what is known in some systems as a “caretaker convention.” In some parliamentary systems, the interim period between shifts in administration is referred to as the caretaker period. A caretaker convention is therefore an outline of protocols issued for events during and immediately post-election. These protocols may also be prescribed more formally within a nation's constitution.

Some caretaker conventions specify the following:

- ◆ Governments should avoid making major policy decisions that are likely to commit an incoming government to new policy objectives — the government and the public service should thus maintain the policy status quo
- ◆ Governments should also avoid making significant appointments or signing major contracts
- ◆ Governments should not include public servants in election activities²⁴

In addition to the civil service, the caretaker convention is often shared with cabinet ministers to ensure all are clear on transition actions during and immediately following the election. The goal during this period is to **isolate civil servants from election officials so that non-political staff do not inadvertently become instruments of the campaign.**²⁵

If an opposition party leader has indicated to the head of the civil service the party's intention to adjust the architecture of the government by adding, subtracting or restructuring ministries or departments, the civil service will also utilize this time to prepare for the potential reorganization. The United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, New Zealand and Germany have traditions in which the civil service is the key driver of transition preparedness for potential government or cabinet adjustments.²⁶ The civil service should use this time to gain an understanding of government and opposition party(ies) platforms to ensure they are prepared for all potential proposed changes and shifts in policy that may take place should a transition in leadership or party occur.

To do this, the civil service should:

- ◆ Pay close attention to public pronouncements
- ◆ Review positions taken by candidates during debates
- ◆ Note different party platforms, including special interests discussed or utilized in ads²⁷

These actions will demonstrate to the incoming government that they have studied the party's agenda, commitments and priorities, and are ready to serve at the pleasure of the incoming executive to deliver on those promises.²⁸ In some systems, such as the United Kingdom, the head of the civil service solicits



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information from leaders of political parties through a questionnaire that aims to gather illustrative information from potential leaders on information such as: their plans for cabinet appointments, the size and structure of government, their intended number of special advisors and where the leader and their family intend to live.²⁹

MANAGING ACTIVITIES POST-ELECTION

The period following an election is where transition processes truly take shape. This phase can sometimes be described as a whirlwind. The newly elected executive will need to quickly **shift from a mode of campaigning to governing**. In some countries, an incoming executive is sworn in within 24 hours of election results being announced, whereas in others, the period between the election and swearing-in can range from just a week or two, to a few months. For example, in Estonia, the new prime minister has just one week to present the cabinet to the head of state (the president), and the president then has just three days to accept the proposal.³⁰

Botswana's Constitution

Botswana's Constitution requires the president to serve no more than two terms in office, which equates to 10 years total. In line with this provision, presidents are to leave office immediately following the conclusion of their time in office. Presidents' 10-year tenure is disconnected with the election calendar and may conclude 18-months prior to national elections, with vice presidents assuming office in the interim.³¹ The legislated timing of these limits has led to a history of the president handing the presidency over to the vice president eighteen months prior to the election. While this has provided a smooth transition of power, in the 2019 election the former president broke with his vice president (his party's new leader and presidential candidate) causing an intra-party schism which nearly cost the party the 2019 election.³²

Incoming leader

A newly elected leader (particularly one who has served in the cabinet or party of the outgoing leader) will work to embrace much of that government's legacy, while at the same time distancing themselves from any perceived shortcomings and setting an independent course. This is often a challenge for incoming leaders who will likely have to **choose their cabinet** from former colleagues and possibly former rivals from the party leadership. An incoming leader who wants to put their stamp on a new regime will need to consider what each potential cabinet member brings to the team weighing their management, technical strengths, public standing and political capital.

In many parliamentary systems, the leader-elect will meet with the outgoing executive and their transition team the day after the election and potentially thereafter in the lead-up to the swearing-in. In addition to showcasing trust between parties of government, these meetings offer an opportunity to provide congratulatory sentiments and **pass information and institutional memory** to ensure continuity in national interests and security.

With any change of government or leader **there is often a brief window of time when public attitudes and desire for change remain high**. This period is also a moment where policy or legislative achievements can provide an important boost to the party or leader's popularity. This can quickly dissipate, however, if there are missteps in the transition or if the incoming leader is perceived by the public, party or government as failing to assume effective control of the reins of power. Furthermore, there is often a disconnect that must be managed between the demands of the party activists, who



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were most likely engaged in the election campaign, and the general population. Insiders may be more focused on continuity and preserving key parts of the party's legacy, while some groups within the public may be more receptive to "change" messages, particularly those that address the perceived weaknesses of the previous government. Therefore, it is imperative the new leader work with their team to build trust between parties and with the public during this time.

During this time, leaders-elect will also be **preparing their families** for the significant shift in lifestyle, especially when it comes to security detail, who are often assigned to a new leader and their family for protection. This can be a difficult transition for the incoming leader and their family, as suddenly, someone who may have enjoyed years of freedom will be shadowed by security at all times. The requirements of the security detail around the executive and what that will entail for their lives, including any alterations to their home and normal routine (and to the routine of their family), must be part of a briefing during this phase. A briefing should also be scheduled for the extended family (parents, grown children, caregivers) so that everyone impacted will be aware of the requirements and their implications from day one. This may also be a time to **prepare plans for the role of the executive's spouse**, such as a formal office that manages special policies and public engagement. Additionally, during this time, important family events (children's graduations, family weddings) should be identified and protected in the executive's schedule.

Global Women in Action

In 2008, following 10 years as spouse of former UK Prime Minister Tony Blair, Cherie Blair established the Cherie Blair Foundation for Women to support women entrepreneurs in developing and emerging economies. This followed some of the work she had done during her travels with her husband where she recognized the great barriers many women face in developing countries.³³



First Lady Jeannette Kagame of Rwanda speaks with Cherie Blair, Founder of the Cherie Blair Foundation for Women, at the World Economic Forum in Kigali, May 11, 2016.

Photo credit: Paul Kagame, Flickr, CC BY-NC-ND 2.0



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Outgoing leader

In the immediate days following the outgoing executive's defeat or effective resignation, the outgoing executive and their staff should be consulted on a timetable and arrangements for the handover of power and their views on urgent issues. Protocols and legal frameworks may also dictate government functions during this time.³⁴ Though many parliamentary systems adopt a caretaker convention dictating that any meaningful decisions taken by the outgoing administration during this period include consultation with the incoming administration, the process can prove awkward. Leaders of the civil service are therefore critical in serving as a foundational and neutral party to the two leaders during such interactions, especially if a major decision of the new administration requires immediate attention during the transition period, such as matters of national security.³⁵

The outgoing executive and their staff, as well as the staff of outgoing cabinet ministers, will be consumed in this period with packing their offices and determining their next moves. Protocol should be outlined by the legislature and the civil service on the retention, storage and protection of documents.³⁶ Also, government assets such as mobile phones, computers and cars will need to be returned. Upon departing office, long-time executives will often secure their documents in a holding location until they or their staff have the time to thoughtfully sort and dispose of them. In some cases, outgoing executives develop libraries or foundations as a repository for specific documents that are not subject to government archival laws.

Transition teams

Following an election, a newly elected leader and government must solidify their image as a change agent and as the choice of the people, while assuring the stability of the government.

In the days and weeks following an election, leaders-elect and their teams will seek to build on the election momentum often through the identification and pursuit of "quick wins"³⁷ that fulfill key promises from the campaign trail. Academics have referred to this period as "hitting the ground running," where new leaders are attending to "policy, politics, people and process" quickly and decisively. Others have discussed the importance of taking time to set the right foundation, including taking a thoughtful approach to forming the cabinet and government structure, in addition to staffing up.³⁸

During this time, the transition team's staffing lead and committee will seek out and triage the resumes received and interview qualified candidates for senior positions in government. They will also create lists of those vetted candidates, as well as chiefs of staff, for the incoming ministers. These lists will be provided to the executive and chief of staff and to new ministers for final decisions. While the



Formal group portraits on the occasion of five former prime ministers attending an event at the National Archives of Canada on October 24, 1994 to launch an education kit on the theme of Canada's prime ministers.

Photo credit: © Government of Canada. Reproduced with the permission of Library and Archives Canada (2021), fonds/a197391k. Photo by Paul Couvrette.



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task can, at times, seem overwhelming, the staffing team will sometimes isolate the search for the most urgent 20-30 positions that need to be filled right away and develop a rigorous vetting process for that group. The team may also wish to look beyond the regular pool of political actors in order to recruit particular talent from the private sector for specific posts or ministries.³⁹ As soon as possible after the election, candidates should meet with the executive and/or the executive's appointments designate.

The team will also need to **craft meticulous communications that enable trust between the new leader and the government and people**. Whatever the positions taken during the election/leadership campaign, it is imperative that there not be a sudden shift during the transition period. Statements made during the election/leadership must form the basis of the new government's positioning post-election, which is why communication during the transition period is so important. Both the media and the voting public will be scrutinizing the incoming executive's and government's statements for indications of change and stable leadership.

Civil service

In some parliamentary systems, there are a number of **ceremonial protocols** in the days immediately following the election. The head of the civil service and staff will be instrumental in providing direction to the outgoing and incoming leaders on how to handle these protocols.⁴⁰

In this phase, the civil service is also integrally involved in:

- ◆ Briefing the executive on policy issues of interest, in addition to outstanding goals of the current party and administration, urgent issues to note and upcoming executive travel
- ◆ Arranging security briefings with military, defense and intelligence leadership
- ◆ Assisting with the many logistical requirements involved in setting up incoming executive and staff offices, in addition to protocols related to their swearing-in
- ◆ Setting up cabinet committees as soon as decisions have been made by the executive on the number of committees in the new government, their mandate and their membership⁴¹

TAKING THE REINS OF LEADERSHIP

The incoming executive and their team will be eager to grab the reins of power and put their stamp on their new administration. It will take discipline to manage a smooth transition and adhere to a plan. There are no clear manuals on how to be a successful executive. That is why a well-developed transition plan and process can cement discipline and order throughout the process.

The actions taken by candidates and leaders-elect in the transition weeks before their swearing-in will shape the ease and success of their assumption to power. The demands on the executive's time in their first few days in office are intense. The executive and their inner circle will also be exhausted from running the campaign. Also, **the skills required to run a campaign are markedly different than those which are required to govern**. That is why it is important for planning to occur in the weeks leading up to this moment. It is especially critical that the new leader's executive leadership staff are clear on their roles and responsibilities and can begin executing these priorities from day one.

The first day in office

The new leader's first day in office is an important time for settling into the office and establishing themselves as the executive in power. It may also come with a flurry of responsibilities and considerations, all while the executive is receiving congratulatory calls from world leaders and working to ensure their core staff are set up and in place. Depending on the national security situation of the



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country at the time of the handover, and other world circumstances, there may also be urgent issues to discuss with members of the outgoing (or incoming) cabinet.

Key briefings provided to prime ministers on their **first day** in office include topics such as:

- ◆ Living arrangements and executive office establishment
- ◆ Key or current policies
- ◆ Urgent decisions
- ◆ Executive office/government protocols
- ◆ Intelligence and national security⁴²

*There are no clear manuals on how to be a successful executive.
That is why a well-developed transition plan and process can
cement discipline and order throughout the process.*

Of the issues outlined above, **it is particularly critical that the incoming executive be briefed on national security at the earliest possible moment.** The civil service and military departments responsible for national security will have prepared a briefing and will likely brief the executive immediately upon their election. However, the executive will require further briefings in order to grasp the full depth of national security issues facing the nation. Time will have to be blocked for these particularly important briefings.

Also on the first day, the outgoing executive and their family will be required to move from the official residence. Likewise, the new leader and their family will be moving in. At this time, there is also often the introduction of a full-time security detail to the executive.

The first week in office

There are a myriad of issues that will need to be addressed, at least in a preliminary manner, in a new leader's **first week** in office, including:

- ◆ A short-term plan and deliverables for the first 100 days
- ◆ A critical path for their inaugural speech to parliament and to the citizenry (speech should also outline plans for a government budget, or at least provide an economic outlook and fiscal update)
- ◆ A review of their schedule for international commitments
- ◆ A determination on exact cabinet committee structure and which committees the executive will chair
- ◆ A set schedule for regular meetings, including cabinet and cabinet committees
- ◆ A confirmed outline of cabinet minister vetting and selection processes

Additionally, the executive will want to make plans for:

- ◆ Political appointments
- ◆ Cabinet and cabinet committee structure
- ◆ Parliamentary leadership appointments
- ◆ Minister vetting and confirmations



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Marjan Sarec, Slovenia's Prime Minister, speaks in front of the newly appointed ministers in parliament in Ljubljana, Slovenia, September 13, 2018.

Photo credit: Borut Zivulovic, Reuters/Alamy Stock Photo

Confirmation of cabinet and cabinet committee structures

The executive and their team will want to assess whether they want to maintain the same number of ministers in cabinet or look to restructure based on the values of the incoming administration. If the executive wants to send a particular message to the public, they may wish to create new departments or ministries accordingly. If a transition team was in place prior to the election, **identifying the options for restructuring** is one of the exercises that should have been undertaken. If the intention is to reorganize the cabinet, the transition team will have developed a variety of scenarios or structures for the executive and their team to review and settle on. The number of ministers should always be even, so the executive casts the deciding vote in the event of a cabinet split.

For example, options for cabinet and department restructuring could include:

- ◆ A social affairs “super-ministry” could be created through merging various existing social policy ministries that exist such as community and social services and children and seniors and women
- ◆ A health ministry which might include long-term care or senior care, as well as public health, may be broken down into health and long-term care separately, to demonstrate a greater commitment to the need for improved health planning and services for seniors
- ◆ The heightened awareness of public health as the world rebounds from a pandemic may warrant the creation of a separate department or ministry of public health
- ◆ A new focus on urban issues by creating an “urban renewal” ministry, out of transportation and infrastructure and municipal affairs and housing might also be considered

The downside to merging multiple portfolios into single ministries, in addition to the heavy burden on that minister, is the potential disproportionality in terms of the number of announcements and level of attention. The new administration will, however, want to consider that increasing the number of ministries is sometimes viewed as running counter to the notion of administrative efficiency, and will want to ensure that each new ministry is clear on its mandate, roles and priorities.

The creation of a new cabinet is often influenced by the creation of **cabinet committees**. Cabinet committees are groups of ministers enabled to “take collective decisions that are binding across government to reduce the burden on the full cabinet by allowing smaller groups of ministers to take decisions on specific policy areas.”⁴³ Once the structure and number of members of cabinet has been established by these committees, the executive can then set about the task of cabinet selection. It should be noted that cabinet committees are an intrinsic part of organizing a cabinet. While the decision-making process might theoretically be used to signal change, it will likely matter more to “political insiders” than to the general public.



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The number and structure of cabinet committees is typically considered prior to the election by the transition team. Illustrative examples of cabinet committees include:

- ◆ Priorities and Planning (may also be called *Executive Committee*)
- ◆ Management Board/Treasury Board
- ◆ Legislation and Regulations
- ◆ Emergency Management
- ◆ Health, Education and Social Policy
- ◆ Jobs and Economic Policy

The *Priorities and Planning Committee*, in some systems, is considered to be a mechanism for the executive to identify a “senior” class of ministers, or an executive team, to assist in setting the priorities and agenda of the government. Likewise, the *Management Board* and *Legislation and Regulations Committees* are essentially permanent and fundamental to the government’s operation, while the *Emergency Management Committee* is a fixture of many administrations as a result of previous circumstances. The remaining committees could conceivably be organized along various policy lines, reduced to one, or expanded to many depending on the priorities of the government.

The head of the civil service will have instructed the deputy ministers to begin the process of preparing the transition binders for the executive and their cabinet. Besides the obvious time-sensitive decisions and contentious issues briefing, the first two major briefings will look at the proposed structure of government and the budget.

In forming a cabinet, the executive will want to ensure that all policy briefs are covered and clearly articulated to **avoid overlap and confusion between ministers** as to who has ultimate responsibility for an issue. Ministers will also need to be clear about what the priorities of the government are in a particular ministry or department.⁴⁴ In some contexts, an executive develops “mandate letters,” which are sent to new ministers to direct their policy priorities and other issues of focus in line with the government’s overall priorities.⁴⁵ Making these documents public emphasizes a spirit of transparency, and serve as a type of checklist for the public on the progress of the government in fulfilling the mandate they were elected on.⁴⁶

Selecting the new cabinet and parliamentary leadership

The executive is responsible for overseeing the machinery of government, which encompasses the size and composition of the cabinet, the structure and decision-making process of cabinet, the organization of portfolios, the structure and mandates of ministries, agencies and other entities and the allocation of functions within such entities. Once the structure of the government has been confirmed, time will need to be established to review the cabinet selection process and determine how the executive wishes to proceed.

Choosing a cabinet has been described as the executive’s “greatest power.”⁴⁷ The executive and transition team, having determined the size of the cabinet and various other government positions, will now turn their attention to the potential candidates to fill those posts. The selection of cabinet members will ultimately include a review of an individual’s *ability; experience/freshness; geography/regional representation; gender; ethnicity; leadership rivals; loyalty/long-time supporters of the executive; and electoral pressures*. These must all be balanced against the broader goals of the party, in addition to any relevant coalition considerations. Also, the executive will work to **select appointees who instill confidence in the electorate** of the new leadership.



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Expanding Gender Equality in the Cabinet

Commitments to gender parity in government are critical to advancing gender equality throughout society overall. Equally critical to gender balance is ensuring a nation's government is representative of all communities, including traditional and/or marginalized communities. Leadership commitments to gender equality and the representation of traditional, indigenous and marginalized communities in government appointments is especially vital to ensuring a diverse representation and engagement of these groups in all levels of decision-making. In 2015, newly elected Prime Minister Justin Trudeau named a cabinet composed of an equal number of women and men for the first time in the country's history. Prime Minister Trudeau appointed many women to top posts in government, including those responsible for international trade, environment and climate change policies, and First Nations issues. When asked why, he said "because it's 2015."⁴⁸ In 2020, New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern appointed Nanaia Mahuta, the first indigenous female foreign minister to cabinet in the nation's history. Minister Mahuta is a member of the Māori, New Zealand's largest indigenous group. Though 1 in 7 New Zealanders identify as Māori, there is little representation of the group in government.⁴⁹ Commitments such as those exemplified by Prime Minister Trudeau and Prime Minister Ardern ensure that a nation's government models that of its people, and is inclusive of representation that may uphold and advance the interests and needs of its diverse communities.

In some parliamentary systems, such as the Westminster model, it is commonplace for most or all ministers to be chosen from among seated MPs. In this case, the executive may decide to meet with each MP personally to make such decisions. The executive may also designate a political veteran and/or legal counsel to meet privately with MPs and other cabinet candidates to ensure that **each discloses qualifications or potential conflicts of interest**. At that time, the executive will assess the candidate's interest in cabinet, their commitment to the executive's program and their abilities as aligned to particular portfolios. In a coalition government, the number of cabinet positions to be assigned to coalition MPs will have been determined in the negotiations to form a government. The actual cabinet positions may have been agreed to as well. The executive may also consider choosing members of cabinet who are not elected MPs, but have other critical expertise and may become future MPs. In other parliamentary models, former ministers or those who currently hold the post may be reconsidered for top posts. Additionally, executives may choose from outside government if the fit, interest and expertise of the individual aligns with the post.



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Lessons from Cabo Verde

In 2016, the country elected Prime Minister José Ulisses Correia e Silva, moving the nation from the traditional and liberation ruling Party (PAICV), to the main opposition (MPD) for the first time in more than 15 years. At the time of the election, the country did not have formal executive transition protocols.

At the request of the prime minister, the National Democratic Institute (NDI) organized a cooperative needs assessment with the executive office, which resulted in a set of expert recommendations and an executive staff workshop focused on strategic planning, message development, scheduling and communications. NDI and the government of Cabo Verde then co-hosted, in November 2016, the West Africa Regional Conference on Democratic Transfers of Executive Power, producing (an unratified) summary declaration of key principles and good practices in democratic transitions. The joint conference with NDI was the first time (outside of parliamentary proceedings), that all the main parties came together to discuss points of mutual concern. The former administration was fully engaged in sharing their years of experience with the new/incoming administration that were still learning their new roles. Having this opportunity for experience-sharing among regional peers who had varying expertise in this thematic area, was extremely helpful to stabilize relationships and create a spirit of cooperation in the critical first year of the new administration.

During the conference, NDI also emphasized the importance of gender inclusion and equality, especially for women's political participation. As a result of the good practices shared, Cabo Verde established a framework for increasing women's political participation — which is now a law called Lei de Igualdad (Law of Equality), which makes it mandatory for parties in the National Assembly to have men and women on their lists. If a party has a man leading the list, then the second slot must be for a woman — because parties are required to have at least 50% women's representation. The law was passed in 2019.



Vetting and confirming ministers

The transition team and members of the leader's inner circle may have identified potential candidates and cabinet scenarios — particularly in key areas, such as finance, foreign affairs and defense — before the executive is seated. The initial identification and investigation process is typically carried out in confidence. Security or background checks are generally conducted as part of the vetting process, in addition to an overview of financial interests and investments. In some countries, this process is handled by the civil service, and candidates under consideration are required to complete basic forms and provide consent for this vetting. The screening process is critical and yet must be done often in a very short timeline. As feasible, executives and transition teams should utilize legal counsel, or another neutral party without any commercial ties or interests to the government, to support careful and scrutinized review of potential appointees. Hiring legal counsel for this process also allows the executive to invoke legal privilege if questions are raised at a later date about the vetting process.



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**Mokgweetsi Masisi, takes oath
as Botswana's president during
his swearing-in and inauguration
ceremony at parliament buildings
in Gaborone, capital of Botswana,
April 1, 2018.**

*Photo credit: BOPA/Xinhua/Alamy
Live News*



In some systems, candidates for cabinet posts are asked to complete an extensive questionnaire, which is then reviewed and followed by a meeting between the candidate and either legal counsel or a neutral party, who will determine if any issues are serious enough to raise with the executive. Throughout this process, journalists and activists will aim to find out who is under consideration for cabinet appointment and social media may be rife with speculation. It is advised that the leader-elect or new executive maintain confidentiality of the chosen candidate and notify that candidate before their name is announced to the public. The civil service should also be notified after all members of cabinet are advised so that they can complete final preparations ahead of their swearing-in.

Managing political appointments

Many parliamentary systems retain a full complement of the public service regardless of which party is in power. There may be a need to change a few senior civil servants due to perceived political allegiance, particularly after one party has formed the government for an extended period of time, or where clearly political people have been appointed to historically neutral positions.⁵⁰ However, the majority of appointments that a new and incoming government will face are those that lead various agencies, boards and commissions of the government. These appointments are inherently political, as most officeholders are appointed by the executive and serve “at the pleasure” of the executive.

In most modern political structures, these appointments are managed by a particular team in the executive's office. Most political appointments to the various government agencies are for a designated period of time. While most appointees understand they serve “at the pleasure of the executive,” the existence of fixed-term appointments allows the new administration the opportunity to review the position holders, and determine whether or not they need to be replaced, and the timing of those replacements based on their appointment mandates. The transition plan should include a section on appointments, including an outline of consequential positions that are vacant or will become vacant in the near future, and which will need to be filled, are politically sensitive or high profile and may need to be adjusted immediately. In some jurisdictions, certain agencies, boards or commissions can be large and powerful, and ensuring that the executive has allies in these senior positions will be very important.

In many jurisdictions, while the appointments process has political oversight, the process can be quite transparent. Public facing websites can provide a list of vacancies, explain the application process for these positions and/or outline a process of public advertisement to attract applicants. Some senior positions may still be considered by the executive and cabinet directly, but in these jurisdictions, the majority of appointments to government agencies, boards and commissions originate through the public appointments' website.⁵¹



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Other key positions considered for appointment include:

Deputy leader(s): In some countries, the executive will appoint a deputy leader or several vice/assistant leaders to serve as part of the executive's inner circle and as close advisors. They may also take on special projects or initiatives as directed by the executive.

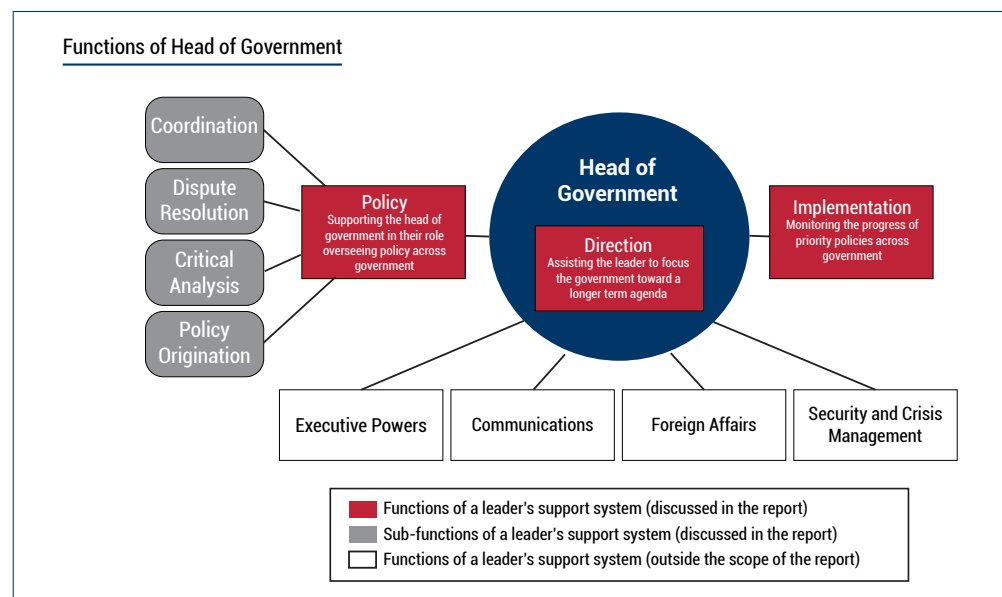
House leader: The house leader is a critical role in a new parliament, as the executive will want to ensure their legislative agenda is well-managed. The house leader is also often sworn in as a member of cabinet or as a minister of a specific portfolio, but ultimately has overall charge of the arrangement and management of government business in the legislature.

Government whip: The government whip is responsible for ensuring members of the government caucus are aware of all legislative business and proceedings and are present for votes.

Chair of cabinet: The chair of cabinet has the practical responsibility of managing cabinet meetings. This person should be an experienced, respected minister preferably with some past experience in cabinet if possible. Some jurisdictions mandate that the executive chair cabinet meetings.⁵²

Following the swearing-in of cabinet, the executive office should plan a training session for the new cabinet. This provides an opportunity for new ministers to gain insight into the governing process, in addition to procedures of cabinet and cabinet committees and full cabinet meetings. This is also an opportunity to provide guidance on concepts such as cabinet confidentiality, solidarity and advisory guidance to the executive.

SETTING UP THE EXECUTIVE OFFICE⁵³



Source: *Institute for Government Working Paper: Supporting Heads of Government (2011)*



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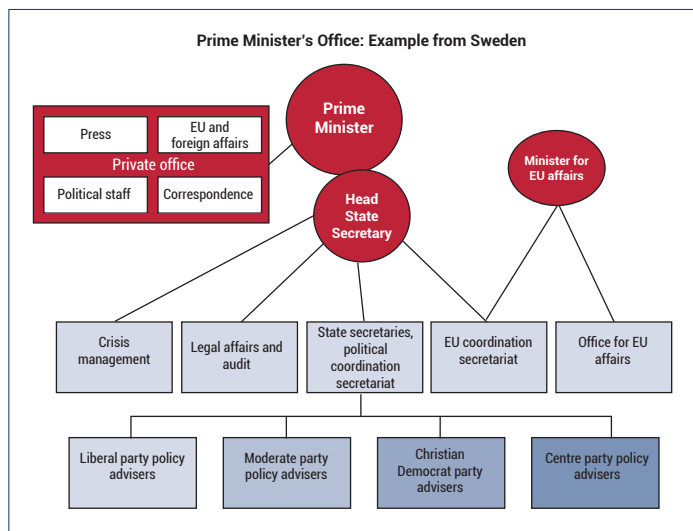
The development of a functional executive office is critical to a leader's success. In setting up the executive office, there will be a number of issues that need to be addressed, including:

- ◆ Logistics
- ◆ Staffing
- ◆ Internal workflow

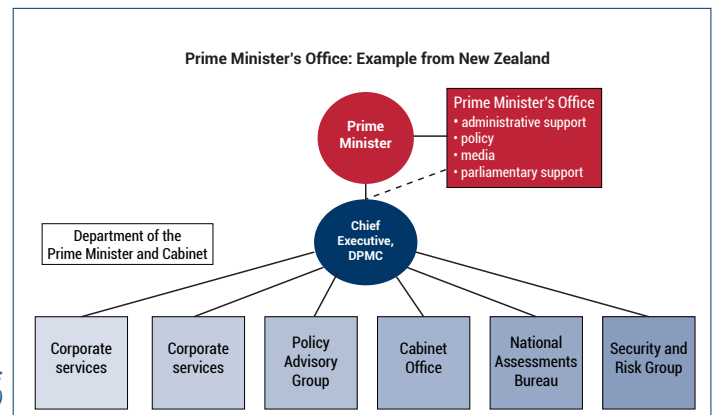
Logistics

The executive usually has an office and an official residence in, or close to, the government and parliament. The office and most of its furnishing are often used by successive leaders, though depending on a country's legal frameworks and traditions, there may be opportunities for the executive to furnish differently. The office of the executive may be provided with a financial allocation by the government for accommodations for political staff and support. In some circumstances, transition staff will attempt to personalize the office by changing the art or photos and ensuring that some personal effects of the incoming executive are in place as they enter the space.

It is important to note that in those situations where the transition does not occur within 24 hours of the election, the former executive will still be in the official office until the swearing-in. In that circumstance, the civil service should prepare a transition space for the incoming executive in or near the government/parliament precinct, with accommodation and IT support for transition staff and incoming executive staff.



Source: *Institute for Government Working Paper: Supporting Heads of Government (2011)*



Source: *Institute for Government Working Paper: Supporting Heads of Government (2011)*



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Staffing

It is essential for the incoming executive to be surrounded by trusted advisors, who will support their effective assumption of power in the transitional period. Executive leadership staff also support the leader's prioritization of issues, policies and vision for turning campaign promises into government reform, and ensure messaging on these priorities are executed consistently and strategically across the various offices and agencies of government. Though an executive will want to create their own unique inner circle and office structure, there are key positions fundamental to most leadership offices that support and enhance effective governance. These positions can be aligned with the following key areas of responsibility and support and are outlined in detail below:

- ◆ Senior advisory guidance (chief of staff and/or senior and principal advisors)
- ◆ Legal department or advisor
- ◆ Policy/political guidance (finance, national security, foreign affairs, economy, etc.)
- ◆ Legislative liaison or team
- ◆ Political appointments
- ◆ Executive secretariat (scheduling department, correspondence department, protocol department, executive/special assistants, human resources, office management, operations, etc.)
- ◆ Communications (director, press secretary, speechwriters, press corps, social media and other assistants, camera operators, etc.)
- ◆ Public engagement and outreach (coordinator, tours office, public events management)
- ◆ Information technology (systems administrators and security experts)

Senior advisory guidance

- ◆ *Chief of staff* —
Most executives will want to appoint a senior individual who serves as a gatekeeper, political and operational advisor and who maintains ultimate oversight of key government actions and affairs to ensure events align with the executive's vision and priorities. This person is typically referred to as an executive's chief of staff, although different systems have various titles for the individual who serves in this capacity. Also, in some systems, the role of "chief of staff" may also be performed by another principal or minister in tandem with their appointed responsibilities. The role of the chief of staff is one of the most important and difficult in any executive operation. It requires extreme vigilance and discretion, expert political and government process knowledge, a problem-solving mentality and astute judgment. The chief must be prepared to defend the executive at all times, helping them make key decisions and ensure others in the government stay in line with those decisions.

The executive will likely have determined who their permanent chief of staff will be prior to the election. This individual will work closely with the transition lead to ensure that there is consistency in the office and a smooth transition and onboarding of the permanent staff. The chief of staff will be at the executive's side during most of the transition and will be integrally involved in all major decisions. The chief of staff may come with the leader from a previous office, may have emerged as the right candidate during the campaign or may be suggested by the transition team

Executive leadership staff also support the leader's prioritization of issues, policies, and vision for turning campaign promises into government reform, and ensure messaging on these priorities are executed consistently and strategically across the various offices and agencies of government.



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who have developed and vetted a short list of candidates. This individual will have a variety of roles including administrator, gatekeeper, counsellor, political advisor, implementer and proxy for the executive.⁵⁴ In some offices, the most senior position is divided into two with the senior chief of staff having responsibility for the political and gatekeeping responsibilities of the office, serving as the executive's main proxy, with a deputy serving the operational components.

Chief of staff key responsibilities and attributes:

- ◆ Supports overall decision-making on office affairs, policies, strategic vision and priorities
- ◆ Serves as gatekeeper, maintains confidentiality and utmost discretion on executive matters
- ◆ Assists executive in identifying potential benefits, risks or consequences to their actions
- ◆ Defends the executive's platform and educates others on the executive's platform
- ◆ Briefs the executive on important details related to responsibilities and daily activities; and is prepared to answer questions of executive regarding these activities
- ◆ Knows when to say "yes" and "no" — has exceptional political knowledge and a high level of understanding on government process and policies in order to direct/advise executive

Deputy chief of staff

Executives may choose to have one or more deputy chiefs of staff to support operations, policies and management. These individuals are key members of the executive's inner circle and work in close coordination with the chief of staff and executive:

- ◆ **Deputy chief of staff for issues management (or crisis response)** — A key responsibility of a chief of staff (or their deputy) is addressing unexpected issues and crises that may arise. This person will work in tandem with the chief of staff, executive and other key advisors or principals involved in the issue or crisis at hand to develop a risk analysis and respond accordingly. The deputy chief of staff for issues management may have been a part of a rapid response effort of the election campaign, which is responsible for identifying possible issues and responding, or addressing crises, scandals and other issues as they arise during the campaign. This is often a very busy position, and the individual must possess good political sense, judgement, a calm demeanour and a collegial attitude as they are often drawn into discussions with various members of the executive team.
- ◆ **Deputy chief of staff for operations** — This individual runs the administrative side of the executive office and is responsible for the logistics, supplies, scheduling, information flow and procurement needs. In some systems, this individual is referred to as an *office manager* or *deputy chief of staff*.
- ◆ **Deputy chief of staff for human resources** — This individual typically has oversight over the human resource components of the executive's office and often ministers' offices. This office serves as a clearinghouse for staffing applications and requirements for political staff in the executive office and ministers' offices, as well as political appointments to all government agencies, boards and commissions.
 - **Political appointments assistant** — This individual's principal responsibility is to review all applications for government agency, boards and commission leadership roles. This individual will also gather recommendations and bring politically acceptable nominees before the executive and cabinet.⁵⁵ This individual will support the executive's final review of all political appointments to government agencies, boards and commissions. The individual is also responsible for vetting the potential candidates and ensures they are qualified and do not have conflicts or will not create controversy. This staff coordinates with ministers' offices with interest in the appointment,⁵⁶ and with the civil service on ensuring that the nominees are processed and presented according to the legislative and legal framework.



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- **Human resource assistant** — This staff ensures compliance with all human resource rules and regulations for political staff, and assists the executive's office and the minister's office in recruiting and retaining staff. This staff works closely with the civil service on administrative issues (payroll, etc.), but deals strictly with political staff.

Legal department or advisor

- ◆ **Director or office of legal affairs** — The executive may choose to have a legal advisor or department related to legal matters, which is critical especially as political appointees are being vetted, and to protect the leader from personal or political legal crises should they arise.

Policy/political guidance

- ◆ **Director of policy** — The director of policy manages all the policy advisors that are responsible for policy oversight in specific sectors. They maintain links with the executive office and ministries, and monitor progress on various initiatives outlined in mandate letters and promised by the executive during the campaign. The director briefs the executive on substantive policy issues in preparation for cabinet deliberations.
- ◆ **Policy advisors** — There can be a number of policy advisors in the executive's office. These individuals will be sector experts, many come from specific sectors and bring a depth of knowledge to the position. The advisors will meet with stakeholders in their sector to be advised on varying views regarding initiatives or to be briefed on specific policy initiatives. This group is responsible for drafting the following:
 - Briefing notes for the executive on policy areas when the executive is attending a meeting with a stakeholder
 - Briefings for the executive for relevant visits and events
 - Background information for the drafting of the inaugural address and other major addresses
 - Briefing notes and comments on cabinet proposals
- ◆ **Political liaison** — This staff is sometimes paid by the political party and may or may not be located directly in the executive's office. Their primary responsibility is to ensure the executive remains connected to the party apparatus and its members.

Legislative-executive relations

- ◆ **Legislative liaison** - This staff person is important to the management of relations with parliament, particularly in a newly formed government. Often a seasoned political veteran, sometimes a former MP or retired senior staff who is familiar with many members of the party and a history of party activities, this individual will have a close relationship with the executive. They will meet regularly with government MPs and cabinet members, assist in addressing any concerns or grievances and will ensure the executive is briefed on any issues that may arise with MPs to ensure especially party support for the executive. This staff person reports directly to the chief of staff or the executive.

Executive secretariat

- ◆ **Executive assistant** — This person sits outside the executive's personal office, and manages all administrative and logistical issues related to the executive's daily routine, schedule and engagements. This individual will maintain coordination with security detail and interactions with the executive's family.
- ◆ **Personal assistant** — This person also sits in the executive's office, and assures that the executive's needs are met. Specifically, this individual will assist the executive assistant in managing the personal aspects of the executive's life, personal appointments, their briefing book, and in the preparation for event logistics and transportation to and from events and home.



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- ◆ **Scheduler** — This position works closely with the executive assistant in managing the flow of invitations to the executive and on setting the executive's schedule. The executive's time is a critical indicator of their priorities as a leader. Who they chose to engage with and how requires important considerations by a high-level and diligent individual. Invitations need to be acknowledged, responded to and often more information is needed before a decision can be reached by the senior staff and/or executive as to whether or not they will attend an engagement. The scheduler may vet most invitations directly with the director of operations or chief of staff to triage requests, often at a scheduling meeting.
- ◆ **Tour director** — The director plans and executes all the executive's travel, including the coordination of security. The tour director may also have an advance team to help plan and execute seamless events and travel. A director's main focus is to manage all the players, and ensure that the many trips and events the executive is attending are thoroughly vetted, planned and executed.
 - **Advance team** — The advance team works closely with the regional advisors to ensure briefing notes for the executive include all relevant logistical event information and that the executive is appropriately briefed. The tour team will also work with the director of communications, the scheduling team and the executive assistant on:
 - Identifying the host (contact) for an event
 - Conducting a site visit to identify all aspects of the event, including arrival doors, holding area, site of the event, podium placement and scene setting, backdrop requirements, a list of VIPs that the executive should be aware of, briefing notes on the location of the event and if a meal is involved – ensuring the executive's needs are met
 - Coordinating with security detail to ensure that they have all the information they require and that they can perform their own security review and sweep if necessary
 - Ensuring the communications team is briefed on the event
 - Preparing requirements for photography, videography and press clearance
 - Ensuring executive speaking notes, press releases and backgrounders are prepared
 - Preparing any protocol briefings in the event of a foreign visit
 - Ensuring local media is identified and contacted, and media interviews booked if desired
 - Preparing a "minute by minute" detailed event itinerary, which includes every detail of the executive's participation in the event

Communications

- ◆ A robust, professional communications operation is one of the most critical elements of the executive team. This will be discussed in detail in the section on [executive communications](#).

Public engagement and outreach

- ◆ **Regional desks** — The executive must be briefed and kept apprised of issues across the nation. Depending on the size and scope of the country, a regional team might be comprised of officers who handle different state and local jurisdictions. Each staff member at a regional desk will be responsible for monitoring current events and the media in that jurisdiction and will be familiar with local leaders and be aware of emerging issues, conflicts and controversies. They are responsible for briefing other members of the executive office on pertinent issues of the region, reviewing funding announcements in a particular region, reviewing public appointments for any candidate from the region or position in the region and maintaining important ties to the staff of all MPs of the region.
- ◆ **Ethnic outreach** — Each jurisdiction will need to assess whether there is a need for a specific staff who is responsible for maintaining relationships with the leadership of specific ethnic communities and their media outlets.



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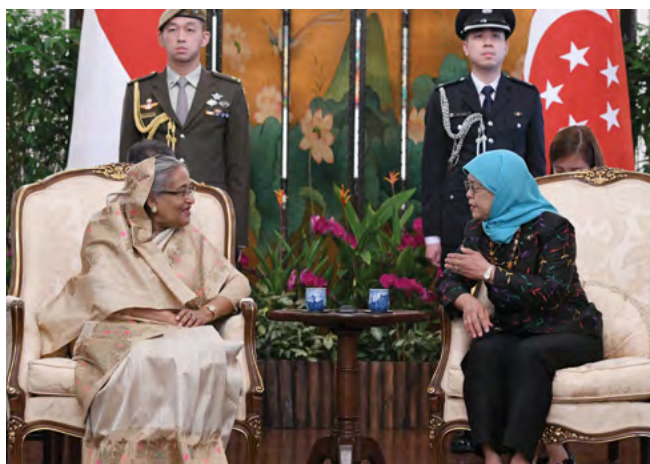
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Singapore's President Halimah Yacob (R) meets with Bangladesh's Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at Singapore's Istana, March 12, 2018.

Photo credit: Then Chih Wey/Xinhua/Alamy Live News

Inclusive Governance and Representation

Inclusive representation of minorities and ethnic groups is critical to effective national decision-making. Though some governments reserve seats in parliament for indigenous peoples and minority groups, it is critical for executives to ensure they remain in tune with the needs of these groups in addition, especially through accessible two-way communications channels that create opportunities to represent the interests of ethnic groups on a national stage.^{57, 58} In Australia, in 2009, the government of Victoria adopted a Multicultural Communications Policy that requires all Victorian government departments to develop communications strategies for culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities. One provision within the policy stipulates that government departments and agencies are required to “commit a minimum of five percent of their campaign advertising budget to CALD media.”⁵⁹ In Canada, both the constitution and the Official Languages Act require federal documents be printed in both English and French, the country's official languages.⁶⁰

- ◆ **Stakeholder outreach** — Often the executive office will have staff who manage relationships with major stakeholders in the jurisdiction, including labour organizations, business groups and professional organizations. This position is sometimes physically located in proximity to the policy advisors, as they often share information.

Information Technology

- ◆ **Information technology specialist** — This individual or team manages all the technology needs and logistics of the executive office, including information security.

Internal Workflow

A functional executive office is designed to ensure efficient use of everyone's time — in particular, the executive's time. Leading up to and during the campaign, many individuals — including the campaign team, political aides, supporters, friends and family — may have become accustomed to unfettered access to the executive. After the election, they may feel entitled to a similar level of access; however, the executive's time is a valuable commodity that must be protected and managed.

The executive will need to determine the process for decision-making in their administration. It is an important task of the transition team to identify the executive's preferred style of decision-making



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— including preferences on staff access, briefing style and time management — during the first two phases of transition and prior to the inaugural cabinet meeting. This will influence how information flows will be managed.⁶¹

Some executives prefer broad consultation for decision-making, particularly on new initiatives. If the executive requires numerous stakeholder briefings to make a decision, sufficient time should be allotted in the schedule accordingly. Conversely, if the executive is satisfied that their civil service, and minister's and executive office policy staff have adequately canvassed issues, they may be satisfied with succinct briefs and short in-person briefings from these various players.

It is advisable to **set clear parameters early on with a gatekeeper managing access and information flows**. It is also critical to communicate these expectations and processes to staff at all levels. New offices should develop efficient internal workflow processes with incentives that encourage compliance.

Some mechanisms for maintaining executive office functionality and workflow:

- ◆ Daily senior staff meetings
- ◆ Weekly scheduling meetings
- ◆ Weekly chiefs of staff meetings
- ◆ Weekly communications team meetings
- ◆ Weekly all staff meetings
- ◆ In-depth policy or issue-specific briefings
- ◆ Embedded travel time, office hours and other private hours in the executive's calendar
- ◆ Leadership preparations/flow of information

Daily senior staff meetings: An important tool in the maintenance of office functionality and workflow is the existence of regular staff meetings between principals and the executive team. As it relates to core senior staff, it is advised that each morning the chief of staff, deputy chiefs, executive assistant, communications director and other relevant senior advisors gather to review the day's schedule and any issues that have arisen in the last 24 hours or that need to be immediately addressed. This meeting should be held early in the morning — with the executive — and chaired by the chief of staff, to allow the executive to hear from principals, be able to ask questions, review the schedule, address any necessary communications that must go out and ensure that the executive feels well briefed. A quick roundtable should then be held with specific policy or other staff to address any outstanding issues, or issues which have arisen in the last 24 hours in their particular area of responsibility.

Weekly scheduling meetings: A weekly scheduling meeting should be convened with the scheduler to review invitations and other demands on the executive's schedule. This meeting should also include a broader cross-section of the executive office staff who can assess the level of importance of invitations and the implications from a political/regional/stakeholder management perspective. The invitations and other requests presented in the meeting should have a set of details attached to facilitate informed and expeditious decision-making.

Weekly chiefs of staff meetings: The executive's chief of staff should chair a weekly meeting of the ministers' chiefs of staff to ensure that all minister staff are aligned with the executive's messaging and priorities and to share and receive information.

Weekly communications team meetings: The director of communications in the executive's office should chair a meeting of the directors of communications of all the minister's offices and the communications planners. This is an important information-sharing opportunity and will ensure ministry message coordination such that the government is speaking with one voice.



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Weekly all staff meetings: The chief of staff should chair a weekly or bi-weekly meeting of all the executive's staff. The executive does not attend this meeting. This can be a brief 30-minute meeting, but it will allow the chief to share information with the entire staff and maintain staff cohesion. It will also allow for any disenchanted staff to share any concerns within the group and maintain staff solidarity.

In-depth policy or issue-specific briefings: The senior staff meeting can be followed by a more in-depth briefing for the executive with issue-specific members of staff to go over major events or issues of the day. Few people should have open access to the executive. That said, the executive assistant should try to maintain some "flex time" in the schedule on a daily basis for whatever issue may arise. Most briefings for the executive will be held in the executive's suite of offices with members of the civil service, or the executive's staff coming to brief the executive to avoid a loss of time in the schedule for travel time to meetings.

Embedded travel time, office hours and other private hours in the executive's calendar: The executive should be provided with a list of calls that can be made when traveling. Depending on cellular coverage, the executive can take calls or meetings when travelling. While some executives appreciate the quiet time of travel for reading their email, their briefing note and catching up on social media or their personal email, etc., it is always wise for an executive to carry a list of individuals with contact information to touch base with if they find themselves with time. These can be political allies, former colleagues, people in their district or individuals they want to stay in touch with.

Leadership preparations/flow of information: In order to ensure the executive is prepared for the many meetings and consultations they attend and are ready to make decisions on complex public policy issues, they require a certain level of background briefing material. In the UK, there is a tradition of the **red box** which is sent home with the executive every night and delivered to them over the weekend (possibly three or four over the weekend). The box contains briefing notes on policy issues, cabinet documents to be reviewed, important correspondence which has been received or drafted in response and questions on upcoming travel or events for the executive to consider. In Canada, the tradition is to have a **briefing binder** "go home" with the executive. The box or binder is managed by the chief of staff and/or executive assistant. Staff are provided with strict guidelines about what can be included in the box/binder and the format so that it meets the needs of the executive without being overwhelming. It is important to have a balance of urgency and information. The executive will, in the short term, need to assist in setting the right balance, the detail required and the expectations for turn-around.⁶²

EXECUTIVE COMMUNICATIONS

Communication is a vital component in a transition. The executive will want to ensure messaging that is clear, consistent and heard throughout the country. As governments are intensely scrutinized in this time of 24/7 news, it is **highly recommended that the first communications of the new executive be prepared in advance and approved prior to the end of the campaign**. While press releases and other communiques will need to be tweaked, having a communications plan for the first week will allow the new executive and administration to manage the messaging and ensure that the image they project is professional and understands the people's expectations for reform. While most of the real transition work is done behind closed doors, the appetite for information is insatiable in a 24/7 media environment. Having professionals in place to take on the task of communicating with the media and public from the beginning — such as preparing press releases for any eventuality, or preparing media opportunities for the new executive — shows the country and government that the transition is running smoothly. Furthermore, governments that engage in open and accessible two-way communications — whereby governments and citizens have opportunities to engage with one another — are critical to building trust between the government and the public. Open and transparent



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information-sharing is especially critical during a transition period, when a new leader is working to align their new platform and agenda with public priorities.

Understanding Disinformation

Communications staff must be aware of the impacts of disinformation on national discourse and the communications sphere at large. Disinformation is a growing global threat impacting all nations. Disinformation is false information that is intended to deceive or sway an audience in favor of a specific set of interests. Disinformation is often deliberately targeted at vulnerable groups, or used to perpetuate social divides, especially among marginalized communities. Not to be confused with general disagreements or democratic discourse, disinformation itself is intended to manipulate the information sphere in order to benefit its originator. Communications staff must maintain awareness of such falsities and be diligent in amplifying news literacy and strong professional, independent journalism that upholds information integrity. Additionally, communications staff must also utilize methods of transparency and openness in order to build trust with citizens, in further efforts to counter disinformation.

Some of the elements⁶³ to be considered at the outset:

- ◆ **Message:** A clear message framework should build on election/leadership branding and will establish a platform that represents a clear, achievable set of leadership priorities the public understands and can connect to their central priorities.
- ◆ **Events:** Know if the executive should be involved in events beyond ceremonial requirements. As the executive will have just survived a grueling campaign and will be inundated with briefings and demands, the number of events should be limited, but impactful.
- ◆ **Public opinion research:** Ensure that issues currently resonate (both positively and negatively) with the public, while adding the new executive to the equation.
- ◆ **Cross-party relations:** A new government will need voices from across the government to counter opposition attacks, and so the executive is not forced to defend or push back at every turn, and can be left to govern and viewed as a leader.

Governments that engage in open and accessible two-way communications — whereby governments and citizens have opportunities to engage with one another — are critical to building trust between the government and the public.

It is important for a new administration to have a coordinated message. To that end, a **structured and integrated communications team** is important to develop across the new government. Within the executive's office there should be a communications team that reports to the director of communications, who in turn reports to the chief of staff. The director of communications (through directive and oversight by the chief of staff and executive) in the executive's office will have overall oversight of the communication strategy for the government, including the executive's speeches and messaging, but also **coordinating the messages of the ministers to ensure the government has a cohesive and coherent message across all media platforms.**

- ◆ **Communications director** — The role of communications director is pivotal. In some contexts, this role may be conducted by a minister of information. This communications professional should have experience in the area of public communications and public relations. They should



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be intimately familiar with the jurisdiction, the political landscape and the national press. They should be familiar with the executive, their history, and the general message of the campaign platform. Political experience — in either having worked with political officials or parties — is also an important asset. The communications director is a member of the executive's inner circle, and will have overall responsibility for the executive's and the new administration's messaging.

- ◆ **Press secretary** — A press secretary is an essential component of the communications team as spokesperson for the leader or government. The press secretary should have the ability to manage the media's demand for information, while providing the executive with sound advice on what to expect in terms of interviews and press coverage more broadly. The press secretary will manage media availability or press conferences, and will provide background information to the media where appropriate. Often a press secretary will have a journalism background.
- ◆ **Communications planner/officer(s)** — The communications planner/officer works with ministries to ensure the message of the executive is coherent and consistent across the entire government. Communications planners work in tandem with communications directors within each agency or ministry to ensure consistent, coordinated and on-target messaging by all departments to ensure that the main message of the government is being consistently delivered and received at any given time on a variety of channels.
- ◆ **Speechwriter** — Speechwriters must be able to process and synthesize a large quantity of information, while drafting and framing a text in the "voice" of the executive. Some new administrations retain the services of a few speech-writing consultants to find the right "fit" for the executive prior to filling the position permanently.
- ◆ **Social media/digital director** — With the increasing number of social media platforms and outlets, an executive's communications team will include a social media manager and, as feasible, a team of digital specialists. This team will deliver the messages prepared and approved by the planner and director of communications. The social media team will post executive information and messages on the appropriate platform, and work with videographers to post video clips as relevant. Each minister may have their own communications person responsible for their social media, in addition. It is critical that the overall message of each minister has been coordinated with the communications planner/officer — including minister announcements or statements on key issues, as it is critical no one minister gets out ahead of the executive in critical government announcements.



New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern speaks at the art gallery of the national museum "Te Papa" in Wellington, New Zealand, May 28, 2020.

Photo credit: Xinhua/Alamy Stock Photo

- ◆ **Correspondence** — The correspondence team is responsible for all correspondence addressed to the executive. The team will review all incoming correspondence and respond. Some offices respond to all correspondence with a standard electronic or written acknowledgement, and follow up with a substantive response if necessary. Some take the position that if the correspondence includes a return address of some kind, an acknowledgment is necessary. The correspondence team will flag to the director of communications any correspondence which might be considered threatening, and the director will take appropriate action — including advising the security unit.



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The correspondence team will liaise with the policy team for content to respond to substantive questions. The correspondence team also drafts congratulatory notes for citizens celebrating milestones and special celebrations. The correspondence team will also provide regular reports to the chief of staff regarding the volume and policy content of most of the correspondence received.

In order to attain this **cohesion**, the director of communications and their team must maintain strong linkages with the various ministers' offices and their respective directors of communications. Each minister's office should coordinate their communications team with the information team (statistics, policy analysis) from their ministry. This, in turn, provides a funneling of up-to-date information on policies and programs to the executive's office for integration into the executive's messaging on particular issues. This **integration function** is typically delegated to communications officers throughout the government, but is coordinated centrally through the directors of communications via their weekly meeting.

There are a growing number of methods to communicate with the general public. An executive's communications team will typically encompass a specialist(s) in each of these areas to ensure the executive's and the government's message is being heard by the broadest possible audience:

- ◆ Media releases
- ◆ Social media
- ◆ Traditional communications/printed mailings
- ◆ Blog posts
- ◆ Public engagements

Media relations

It is important for the executive to maintain a good relationship with the media. The choice of a press secretary is an important one as this individual will be the go-between for the executive with the parliamentary press corp. It is important for the executive to find the right balance between being available to the media to respond to their inquiries or emerging issues, but to not create an expectation that the executive will be available at all times. Some administrations institute a weekly press availability, while others maintain an ad hoc schedule to allow flexibility in the executive's schedule. The press secretary will be able to gauge the level of satisfaction of the press corps with their access and adjustments can be made.

In drafting a press release, it is often helpful to include a "backgrounder" which provides the policy underpinnings for any given announcement or statement. Additionally, when issuing an electronic press release, it is helpful to attach a voice or video clip of the executive.

Press conferences and media availability

It is useful to have an established process for the executive's press conferences or media availability. The distinction itself will set expectations for the media. The setting will also send a message as to the level of formality of the event. A press conference is often located in a more formal setting with an official backdrop (flags, etc.) while a media availability is more informal and may be staged outside of the executive's office or the legislative chamber, elsewhere in the legislative precinct or as the leader is "en route." The press secretary will provide the media with notice of a media availability while a more formal notice of a press conference will be provided — usually with more lead time. Either may include an opening statement by the executive, though a press conference will likely include a prepared statement. Both usually include a question and answer period with the media. The press secretary will manage and be responsible for setting a limit on questions and drawing the event to a close.



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Open government and two-way feedback

Government openness mechanisms — such as government websites, press conferences, leadership townhalls, public events and information-sharing technologies — provide citizens with accessible means for gathering and sharing information with their elected officials. Commitments to providing government openness and transparent information-sharing strengthens public trust and confidence in institutions, and advances promises for accountability and transparency of government resources, and ultimately, service delivery. Two-way feedback allows both the government to provide information externally to the public, and for the public to have opportunities to share their feedback and priorities in return. Whether this is done through live or public forums, such as a press conference, or through online information-sharing channels that report information on policy plans and implementation, such mechanisms enhance a leader's visibility to the public, especially as they work to codify their priorities and vision in their first few months in office. To develop commitments to government openness and transparency, leaders can work with global networks, such as the Open Government Partnership (OGP),⁶⁴ which supports governments in developing national commitments to openness across all levels.

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES IN THE FIRST MONTHS OF GOVERNMENT

Cabinet meetings

In order to move the government's agenda forward, the executive will need cabinet support and approval on new initiatives and expenditures. As mentioned in earlier sections, the cabinet sets the government's policies and priorities for the jurisdiction. The **executive and ministers make decisions on government policy and initiatives**. Cabinet considers proposals brought forward by ministers. A minister will bring forward proposals to the cabinet to consider issues under their purview. A minister can:

- ◆ Advance a new policy or initiative often set out in their mandate letter
- ◆ Implement priorities that were set out in the inaugural speech or the budget or at the executive's request
- ◆ Propose a substantive change to an existing program or policy
- ◆ Advance a proposal that implicates other ministers' responsibilities, other jurisdictions or that may be controversial
- ◆ Submit legislative proposals to parliament or respond to a parliamentary committee or to private members' bills or motions

Cabinet meetings are usually held at a regularly scheduled time — often weekly. Naming a cabinet minister to the role of chair of cabinet allows the executive the flexibility to hear and participate in the discussion at **cabinet meetings** in order to come to a decision on key issues, although some executives do prefer chairing their own meetings (or are mandated to do so as in Denmark). Some executives prefer presenting their final proposal for discussion and possible refinement, though all members of cabinet will be clear that the decision has been made. Other executives solicit views from as many cabinet members as possible within the confines of the length of the discussion assigned, with the minister responsible for the policy presenting their brief first and comments from any ministers following. At the end of these discussions, the executive may impose their view or can move toward a consensus. Alternatively, the minister responsible for the item may be directed to return with a modified proposal for further discussion. However, once the decision is reached, the doctrine of cabinet solidarity requires that all members of cabinet support the decision publicly.⁶⁵



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However the executive wishes to conduct cabinet meetings, it is important that they are **fully briefed** on each agenda item prior to the meeting in order to make an informed decision or clearly identify what, if any, supplementary information is needed. These briefings, usually held the day before the cabinet meeting, will include the chief of staff, the director of policy, possibly deputy chiefs of staff for issues management and senior members of the civil service. As well, on a particular area of public policy with broad implications, the executive may want to canvass the views of government MPs and/or with interest groups directly.⁶⁶

Cabinet discussions and materials are confidential, as ministers must be able to express their views freely and frankly.⁶⁷ In some governments, such as the United Kingdom and across the European Union, once cabinet has agreed on a decision, ministers must support that decision in public,⁶⁸ in accordance with the doctrine of cabinet solidarity or the convention of collective responsibility.⁶⁹ Collective responsibility is the convention whereby individual members of the government (cabinet ministers) are held accountable for the actions and decisions of government as a whole.⁷⁰ Whatever the range of private views put forward by ministers in the cabinet meeting, once decisions are arrived at and announced, they are supported by all ministers. This ensures that the government is collectively accountable and responsible to the parliament and to the public.

Inaugural address to parliament

The incoming government will be pressed to set out their plan for legislating. The inaugural address to parliament is that opportunity.

The inaugural address sets the tone for the incoming government, and frames the agenda for the first few months or years of government activity. The political platform on which the party was elected will likely form the foundation for the inaugural address and the subsequent budget. If the executive has achieved power by forming a coalition, the coalition agreement will also impact the inaugural address



French President Emmanuel Macron flanked, by his cabinet director Patrick Strzoda and Élysée general secretary Alexis Kohler, holds a meeting with the Prime Minister's cabinet director Benoît Ribadeau-Dumas, Justice Minister Nicole Belloubet, Prime Minister Édouard Philippe, Interior Minister Christophe Castaner and Interior Junior Minister Laurent Nuñez at the Élysée Palace in Paris, France on March 18, 2019.

Photo credit: Ludovic Marin/Pool via Reuters/Alamy Stock Photo



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as it will need to include those initiatives that coalition members have negotiated on for their support. The **inaugural address will outline the policy ambitions of the executive** and the incoming administration and detail its legislative program for the legislative session (the upcoming months/years). The transition team will have identified possible drafters in its early work who will form the nucleus of the team who will draft an early cut of the address from the policy proposals set out in the election platform.

A major decision in any jurisdiction will be the timing of the address, the recall of the legislature and the announcement of the timing of the next budget or financial statement. In some cases, for political reasons, the executive may have committed during the election campaign to recalling the legislature on a specific day to indicate their intention to “get to work immediately.”

Engaging the opposition

Engaging the opposition can be a key challenge for any new administration, particularly if the government is a minority or coalition government. In either situation, the executive will have to come to some kind of arrangement — formal or informal — with the opposition leader(s) in order for the legislature to resume sitting and to allow government business to proceed.

In a coalition context, the executive will have set out some arrangement with other parties or MPs of other political parties to ensure their support in moving the legislative agenda forward. This arrangement will include support for various parties’ legislative initiatives and likely the inclusion of coalition MPs in the cabinet.

In a minority situation, the executive will need to negotiate with the opposition parties on how the parliament can proceed. The executive can move forward as they would with a majority knowing they will need to engage with the opposition parties or individual opposition MPs on any government legislative initiative while assessing if they have the necessary support to proceed through the various stages of the legislative process. The government may need to engage at each stage of the process and concessions will likely be required.

Alternatively, the executive and their transition team can try to negotiate some form of accord that would include the legislative concessions required by the opposition to support the government’s agenda. This accord would likely be time-limited and would provide the legislative agenda for the minority government over that period of time.

The executive will want to choose their emissaries carefully, and be prepared to listen in order to have a meaningful dialogue and negotiate some form of understanding that helps to avoid another election. Media reports will often include public pronouncements from opposition parties, but in order for a minority parliament to function, some type of working relationship with the opposition has to be established.

In preparing for these discussions, some of the factors to be considered are:

- ◆ An in-depth knowledge of the opposition party(ies) platform(s) and positions in relation to the new government’s platform and mandate
- ◆ Background on any previous negotiations between the parties
- ◆ Possibly proposing to the opposition the use of outside players (former MPs, political actors) to be part of the negotiating teams
- ◆ Determining who in the newly elected government has a good working or social relationship with members of the opposition
- ◆ With more than one opposition party, separate teams should be considered with one person overlapping on all negotiations, if possible



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COALITION TRANSITIONS

Coalitions refer to governments in which a consortium of political parties come together under a **mutual agreement** to govern based on the interests of multiple party platforms together. Coalitions have a number of different purposes, including like-mindedness in order to overcome a political crisis, developing national unity or creating a “credible alternative to government.”⁷¹

Coalition transitions vary significantly depending on a country’s structure of government, in addition to the purpose of which they were formed. That is because the number of parties, in combination with the **level of trust and party cohesion between parties**, weighs heavily on the overall success of leaders coming together before, during or after an election to agree on a pathway forward in the transition.

This section provides a brief overview of guidance in managing coalition transitions, given the many similarities in overall preparation and process that are comparable to the guidance outlined in the full chapter on parliamentary transitions. It should be noted that coalition transitions are different from majority party contexts, given they require not only the leadership vision of one individual, but also the collective and shared vision or platform of two or potentially many more party leaders and interests as based on a **negotiated pathway forward**.

There are many excellent resources on comprehensive coalition transitions and development including this brief checklist⁷² on coalition development guidance for political parties, and this in-depth guidance⁷³ on coalition systems and transitions, developed by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development with an outline of cases from Poland, Sweden, Denmark, Sweden, Canada, and France. Additionally, this comprehensive resource⁷⁴ developed by NDI provides a full overview and guide on the development, maintenance and execution of coalition governments. A brief overview of coalition transitions is discussed in the following paragraphs.

Pre-election planning

Regardless of the exact party dynamic of a coalition government, preparations for a coalition transition before an election are crucial. That is because an electoral alliance must be prepared to assume leadership power quickly upon being sworn into government. Should there be major issues concerning party platforms across the coalition, or if a newly appointed or elected leader fails to form a cohesive coalition with a shared vision or goals, the assumption to power can stall, threatening the overall stability and continuity in government. Specifically, leaders must understand the following:

- ◆ What is the political culture between and among parties in the coalition?
- ◆ What is the recent history of coalitions in the country?
- ◆ Is there cooperation between parties generally or is there disagreement on major issues?

In order to be successful, these dynamics must be understood, discussed and negotiated before an election. This process helps solidify the foundation for the overall party strategy, which will carry the coalition through its subsequent negotiation period, which forms the basis of the overall government under its leadership.

To develop a coalition party strategy, there must be trust and collaboration between and among partners of the coalition, in addition to respect for one another’s views and policy interests. Further, **a willingness to compromise or balance interests and initiatives is crucial** to the success of the process writ large. Preparations before the election include joining party leaders together to address policy goals. This ensures there is a plan for government action by the time leaders assume power.



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Also before an election, members of parties should join together to **establish core party principles** or provisions that they will not concede. Without an understanding among all members on these core issues, the coalition negotiations may stall or fail.

Post-election negotiations

Following a successful election, party leaders of a coalition must begin the work of preparing to enter government. In a coalition system, this means entering negotiations with other party leaders before the government can be formed. In some systems, parties form a post-election planning team, or a coalition alliance team that maintains ties with coalition leaders they campaigned with. Such teams can be beneficial to ensuring the subsequent negotiations between party leaders occur swiftly and smoothly in the weeks thereafter.

Coalition negotiations form the benchmark of the structure of the government, its procedures, and processes before any implementation of policy or ministerial appointments can occur. Many parties form a standalone negotiating team, which allows the process to occur quickly and effectively. Again, ensuring all members use the pre-election time to become clear on key party principles before the negotiation begins is paramount to the overall success of the process.

Assuming leadership

If a coalition negotiation is successful, party leaders will work in their first weeks in office to ensure members of the larger party and the public are in favor of the coalition agreement. Of course, the representation of the citizenry in the development of the negotiation is essential, and leaders who assume that a negotiation is final without the backing of their larger party and public, may be chastised or lose favourability among the public, which can threaten the overall success of the transition.

Following a coalition negotiation and subsequent formalization of the government and its processes and procedures, party leaders must use their first months in office to maintain effective cohesion and communications among members of the consortium. It is also advised that coalitions establish “dispute resolution mechanisms” at the beginning of their government tenure so that any issues that may arise have a standard solution approach. Disagreements between members or leaders of the coalition should be kept confidential so as to avoid public dissent on minor issues, threatening once again the stability of the overall coalition and government.

Keys to success in assuming executive office

Executive office development in a coalition system mirrors many of the processes that are discussed in this chapter. A coalition leader or party leaders (depending on the party system) will work to ensure their staffing operations, appointment decisions and communications on policy rollout and implementation plans are cohesive, consistent and in line with promises made during the election period. The difference is that these processes require consistent attention and cooperation with other leaders within the coalition.

In order to be successful, coalition leaders must develop clear lines of communication through both intra- and inter-party coordination. Leaders are advised to select executive staff who are committed to this goal, and who have the **capacity to work with their peers** across the coalition. It will also be important for party leaders to **work together to ensure consistency in their external communications**, especially given the importance of maintaining continuity between and among members of the entire collective when announcing policy decisions or handling issues of national importance.



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SEMI-PRESIDENTIAL TRANSITIONS

Semi-presidential systems involve a shared power arrangement between a president and prime minister. There can be premier-presidential systems (or parliamentary-presidential), and president-parliamentary systems. In the latter, the president has the power to unilaterally dismiss the prime minister and cabinet, which is not the case in premier-presidential systems.

Depending on the specific architecture of the system as outlined by a country's constitution, arrangements of power sharing differ. For example, in Tunisia, the president of the republic has overall executive authority, whereas the head of government (or prime minister equivalent) oversees the government.⁷⁵ Whereas the president is responsible for "protecting the state and the national territory from all internal and external threats," they must do so in consultation with the prime minister, who has the ultimate authority to declare war, and is the commander-in-chief of the armed forces.⁷⁶ In Georgia, the president appoints the prime minister, and has ultimate authority over the implementation of government laws and programs, though they also require consent and signature by the prime minister.⁷⁷ The same is true in the Namibian and Malian systems. In Russia, the president has distinct powers over legislative decisions, while the prime minister is required to implement policies. The opposite is the case in Ukraine, where the prime minister is tasked with policy development and the government with policy implementation.⁷⁸

Transitions in semi-presidential systems depend formally on the power-sharing arrangement under a country's constitution. Depending on who holds the ultimate authority and who has the backing of the legislative majority, transition processes and readiness will fall more predominantly within that individual leader's camp, and often be more publicized or widely recognized by the public. For example, in France, when there is cohabitation and the president's party is not represented in government, governing power *de facto* shifts to the prime minister. Of course, both presidents and prime ministers must equally prepare to assume leadership power in order to ensure the security and sustainability of a nation; however, these processes may occur at different times. For example, in the case of an appointment of a leader to parliament by a head of state, preparations to assume office may occur simply following the appointment, given there would not have likely been much if any time to prepare.

The central difference is that semi-presidential transitions involve a power-sharing balance between two executives, especially in the relationship of forming the government, appointing ministers and staff and handling matters of ultimate policy and national security. That is why it is important for transitions in these systems to involve meetings between the president and prime minister to ensure those power-sharing agreements are handled effectively and with care and consideration of the needs and priorities of the populace.

Many of the processes incurred by leaders in transition in a semi-presidential system are outlined in both the parliamentary and presidential sections of this guide. For additional guidance and information on managing transitions or specific constitutional authorities in a semi-presidential transition, please refer to these resources:

- ◆ Report on *Semi-Presidential Government in the Post-Authoritarian Context* developed by the Center for Constitutional Transitions at New York University Law⁷⁹
- ◆ Report on *Semi-Presidentialism as a Form of Government* developed by the Center for Constitutional Transitions along with International IDEA⁸⁰



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◆ SECTION II: PRESIDENTIAL TRANSITIONS ◆

At its heart, a presidential transition is the transfer of executive power from one president to another. This could mean a new president from the same political party, a president coming from a different political party or even the same person returning for another term in office. The act of formally swearing-in a new president is short, but the process of transitioning control of government operations from one president to the next is extraordinarily complex: it requires extensive prior planning to ensure readiness to lead on day one of holding office.

A successful transition begins with pre-election planning and continues through inauguration day and stretches into the first months of an administration. It involves key personnel decisions from the outgoing and incoming presidential staff, resources and a host of activities such as vetting candidates for positions in the new administration, helping to familiarize the incoming administration with the operations of the executive branch and enacting a comprehensive policy platform.¹

Successful transitions from one democratically-elected government to the next are not only vital for strengthening representative government and the most profound step taken in a democracy, but they also secure legacies for outgoing presidents and enhance prospects for a successful presidency by the incoming office holder.

Each presidential transition of power is unique and reflective of national circumstances, but the most effective transitions require care, hard-work, significant coordination, as well as recognition of universal planning assumptions that increase the likelihood of success throughout transition phases. The imperative is to begin planning months before the election.²

This section provides insight and instruction on the many key steps both incoming and outgoing administrations, in a presidential system, should take to ensure democratic norms are maintained from one president's tenure to the next.

TRANSITION PHASES

The transition process is defined by several distinct phases involving both incoming and outgoing administrations.

Phase 1. Establishment of Rules for Transition

Phase 2. Stand-Up Period

Phase 3. Achieving Initial Operating Capability

Phase 4. Post-Election Activities

Phase 5. Inauguration Day

Phase 6. The First 100 Days

Phase 1. Establishment of rules for transition

Rules define the legal obligations and parameters in which the transition process takes place. They define permissible activities for the incoming and outgoing teams. These rules most often are established and overseen by the legislative and judicial branches of government. This guide will provide an overview and outline of some [examples of legal frameworks codifying transitions in later sections](#).



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Phase 2. Stand-up period

This phase can best be understood as a series of transition efforts running in parallel by the leading presidential contenders before the election. Each of the major candidates typically assigns a chair and small team to undertake both understanding the legal frameworks for transitions and developing flowcharts for what needs to be done between the current moment and election day, between election day and inauguration and at the beginning of the new president's term. Specific tasks to be completed are detailed later in this guide, as efforts are focused on scoping organizational infrastructure needs is central at this stage.

Phase 3. Achieving initial operating capability

This phase centers on key logistical matters, such as establishing operating budgets, identifying and moving into transition office space, setting up secure information technology and communication networks, building data repositories, launching key information-sharing, analysis and coordination tools, as well as hiring personnel. Key transition deputies for policy, personnel and planning are hired during this period. As will be described in later sections, it is important during this phase for transition actors to define and/or understand (if outlined under legal precedent) resources for transition activities, such as payments for staff, transition offices and operating resources.

Phase 4. Post-election activities

The success of this phase depends to a large extent on the quality of the first three phases. It is during this period that the winning candidate merges the campaign and transition efforts. The president-elect will need a strong organization that gives them appropriate time to focus on politics, policy and personnel. Vetted and well-developed candidate slates for political appointments are filled out, communication teams articulate key messages, legal and oversight groups ensure compliance with rule sets, and outreach is done with the losing candidate, the current president, legislative branch, media and foreign governments. The incoming team will begin to receive formal transition briefings from civil servants assigned by ministries and key government entities, national security issues are detailed and continuity in government processes is understood. Incoming officials with approved security clearances receive classified briefings on national security matters, but those not yet issued security clearances will not be able to see protected materials. For some countries, senior cabinet officials can be nominated prior to inauguration day and these persons will need expert advisers to guide them through the confirmation process.

Phase 5. Inauguration day

Inauguration day and the events surrounding the swearing-in comprise a major phase of the transition. The inauguration must be done well. The president's acceptance day speech establishes the administration's formal tone, priorities, what hopefully will be accomplished and how the outgoing administration will be treated. In many circumstances, a sizable minority of the nation did not vote for the winning candidate. These people will want assurance that their voices count too. Inauguration day is not just a coronation, but the first official day of office holding. The new president will most likely want to issue orders and have a specific substantive agenda on day one. The president will assume control of the nation's national security apparatus and other arms of government. They may be inheriting ongoing crises. Foreign nations will look for positive or negative gestures from the new president.

Phase 6. The first 100 days

Sometimes referred to as "the first 100 days in office," the final phase of the presidential transition is a period of time most often used for completing hiring of political appointments, moving expeditiously



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on policy priorities, clarifying decision-making processes, preparing budgets for the fiscal year, making decisions about key issues at ministries, engaging with foreign allies, partners and competitors, building cooperative relations with legislators and staff to advance the president's agenda, closing down all campaign and transition operations, strengthening leadership of the political party, bringing along the public to support the president's initial agenda, messaging effectively to the media and assisting the outgoing administration in its wind-down operations.

Strong legal and policy frameworks will influence the extent to which the outgoing team is a constructive actor. Successful transitions require cooperation in spirit and practice, and that spirit of cooperation flows from the top.

Transition Players

Elected leaders, civil servants/career officials, political appointees, and external influencers all have major roles in the presidential transition process. Each grouping — all with distinct dynamics, personalities and operating styles — plays a unique role in a successful change of government. It is important for all groupings to recognize the perspective and interests of the other groupings if the new government is to operate to maximum effect. The incoming and outgoing presidential teams will need to give great care to maximize the chance for this to be a positive part of the change process.

ESTABLISHING LEGAL PRECEDENT FOR THE TRANSITION

As noted under phase 1, the establishment of rules of the transition is a critical first step in any successful process. Quite simply, legal frameworks are essential for effective and successful presidential transitions. Legal frameworks substantially increase predictability and transparency in transition processes and procedures and help sustain stable and transparent democratic governance during a leadership handover. They also greatly reduce dependency on the goodwill of incoming and outgoing presidential teams to “do the right thing” for the nation. Further, legal frameworks provide institutional requirements for qualified candidates, presidents-elect and outgoing presidents to prepare for change, conduct the nation's business and authoritatively transfer power to a new team that is ready and able to lead the country on day one.

Lastly, legal frameworks should be developed and enacted by the legislative branch of government. Parliaments are a check on executive branch authority and have the writ and responsibility to establish transition requirements procedures.

There are three distinct mechanics that sound presidential transition legal frameworks may address, including transition *timelines*, *resources* and *powers*.

- ◆ Transition frameworks define actions taken by key actors in the pre-election, post-election and post-inaugural periods. They provide succinct **timelines** on those actions, due dates and requirements on dates to report on transition activities to various branches of government.
- ◆ Transition frameworks define the allotment of **resources** allowed for use by candidates as collected by their campaign or appropriated by the government, in addition to the period when

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specific candidates receive enough support to be deemed credible candidates. Transition resource support provided by the government must be equitable for qualified candidates, regardless of whether candidates are from opposition parties.

- ◆ Transition frameworks define **powers** and privileges of various transition actors in the official transfer of power and close out of the outgoing administration. For example, frameworks define the provision of detailed briefing materials of specific government programs and activities, including national security sensitive activities for designated members of the president-elect's transition team. They may also define activities associated with a comprehensive accounting of actions and holdings by the outgoing administration, completion of record keeping and physical departure, as well as welcoming the new government.

Many governments across the world have legal frameworks codifying presidential transition processes and procedures. In particular, the U.S. has been a pioneer in establishing legal frameworks for presidential transitions especially. U.S. experts and officials acted following the contentious transition of power between incoming Republican party President Dwight D. Eisenhower and outgoing Democratic party President Harry S. Truman in 1953. President-elect Eisenhower reportedly was insulted by Truman's characterizations of him on the campaign trail and refused any transition briefings before the election. Occurring at the dawn of the Cold War between nuclear powers, an American think tank assembled 14 former presidential advisors and then-president Eisenhower's assistant secretary to the cabinet to provide secret pre-election advice to representatives to 1960 presidential candidates John F. Kennedy and Richard M. Nixon. This action set the precedent for pre-election transition exchanges between candidates and the sitting president. The U.S. Congress acted soon thereafter to capture this activity in law³

U.S. Presidential Transition Act

The **Presidential Transition Act of 1963** (PTA) authorizes the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) to provide suitable office space, staff compensation and other services associated with the presidential transition process. The act has been amended a number of times since 1963 in response to evolving understandings of the proper role of the government in the transition process. The **Pre-Election Presidential Transition Act of 2010** authorized additional support to eligible candidates for pre-election transition planning. The **Presidential Transitions Improvement Act of 2015** requires the executive branch to establish two transition panels, one for the office of the president and one for federal agencies, at least six months before the election to facilitate the transfer of power to the next president. It requires representatives from the major candidates to have representation on these transition teams. The Presidential Transitions Improvement Act of 2015 also requires official reporting on transition activities. The **Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004** authorizes the incumbent president to provide certain pre-election officials with expedited security clearances so they can access government classified information and require the president to provide a list of presidentially appointed positions to each major party candidate no later than 15 days after their nomination.⁴



U.S. President George W. Bush and then President-elect Barack Obama walk together at the White House during their leadership transition in January 2009.

Photo credit: Flickr, by Pete Souza, CC-BY-3.0 <<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/>>, via Wikimedia Commons



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The U.S. transition laws include a range of specific requirements that have greatly enhanced transitions between American presidents, including:

- ◆ Establishing and operating a **White House transition coordinating council**, which typically includes senior political employees of the White House, a transition coordinator — typically the White House chief of staff — and transition representatives.
- ◆ Establishing and operating an **agency transition council** which shall include a senior representative from each agency and department, and **meet not less than once per year**, six months prior to the election, and on a regular basis to carry out the duties and authorities of the transition.
- ◆ Naming a **federal transition coordinator** with responsibility for coordinating transition planning across agencies, including through an agency transition directors' council.
- ◆ Designating a **senior career official** at each agency and from each major component of each agency to ensure compliance with all statutory requirements relating to transition planning and reporting, and to act as a liaison to eligible candidates.
- ◆ Providing **guidance to agencies** and the federal transition coordinator regarding preparations for the presidential transition, including succession planning and the preparation of briefing materials; facilitate communication and information-sharing between the transition representatives of eligible candidate offices, prepare and host interagency emergency preparedness and response exercises.
- ◆ Requiring preparation by the outgoing administration of **orientation activities** for the incoming transition officials that include detailed information on known **national security** threats.
- ◆ Negotiating memoranda of understanding (MOU) with transition representatives of each eligible candidate which shall include, at a minimum, **conditions for access** to employees, facilities and documents of agencies by transition staff; protections for the release of sensitive government information; and parameters for settling disputes.
- ◆ Ensuring **equity of assistance** to eligible candidates without regard to political affiliation. Resources for transition assistance are distributed following the certification of official candidates at each major party's political convention such that both certified candidates receive eligible resources at the same time.
- ◆ Submitting **reports to Congress** describing the activities undertaken by the president and agencies to prepare for the transfer of power to a new president.
- ◆ Establishing high barriers for **converting political appointees** into career civil servants, including explanatory reporting requirements to Congress.
- ◆ Disallowing last-minute **rulemaking** by the outgoing administration.
- ◆ Establishing a **wind-down office** for the outgoing president.



Nigeria's outgoing President Goodluck Jonathan (L) congratulates incoming President Muhammadu Buhari after the handover at Eagle Square in Abuja, Nigeria, May 29, 2015.

Photo credit: Afolabi Sotunde, Reuters/Alamy Stock Photo



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Key Components of the U.S. Presidential Transition Law:

- ◆ Equity in support to all eligible candidates
- ◆ Mandatory start-up dates after the nominating conventions, meeting frequency and specific coordinating bodies
- ◆ Reporting requirements to Congress
- ◆ Access to agency personnel, records and briefing materials
- ◆ Orientation activities, including national security crisis planning exercises
- ◆ Prevention of last-minute rule-making and hiring political appointees into career jobs
- ◆ Comprehensive record filing by the outgoing administration
- ◆ Expedited security clearances for incoming president-elect transition team leaders
- ◆ Ability to nominate Senate-confirmed officials before inauguration
- ◆ Designating career officials to coordinate with candidate teams
- ◆ Post-election resources to the outgoing president, such as office space, IT and access to records

Many nations have legal transition frameworks, often reflecting national circumstance and depth of democratic norms. As noted earlier, legal frameworks should be detailed, specific and direct key stakeholders to plan early and share information and access equitably.

Ghana presidential transition law

Ghana established a legal framework for presidential transitions in parliament on May 31, 2012, titled the **Presidential Transition Act of 2012, Act 845**. This detailed law has specific provisions for the composition of the transition team, the functions and meeting frequency of the team, establishment of sub-committees and an advisory council, the handing over of notes, the role of a presidential estate unit, inventory of assets, vacation of official residences and the swearing-in of the president-elect. The act mandates the following:

- ◆ The president and president-elect shall appoint an equal number of persons to the transition team, and the president shall include senior members of the cabinet as well as the head of the civil service, the head of the local government service, the secretary of the cabinet, and the national security coordinator. The president and president-elect shall co-chair the transition team.
- ◆ The transition team will make comprehensive practical arrangements to regulate in accordance with the act the transfer of political power, ensure the provision of daily national security briefings and undertake any other function which will enable the team to achieve the objective of the act. The team will meet not later than 48 hours after the declaration of the result of the election, decisions will be made by consensus, and when consensus is not possible, refer issues to the independent advisory council for adjudication.
- ◆ Sub-committees for inauguration will organize the official transfer of power, including handing over the machinery of the civil service and ministries and the presidency to ensure the orderly transfer of all assets and liabilities to the new president.
- ◆ Formation of an advisory council consisting of the speaker of parliament as chairperson, one eminent citizen appointed by the incumbent president and one by the president-elect. The advisory council shall be empowered to determine binding decisions on issues referred to it by the transition team.
- ◆ The office of the president shall prepare a set of comprehensive handing-over of notes covering the term of the president.



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- ◆ The government will develop an inventory of the assets and properties of government, including a national registry covering all the public lands and any other lands vested in the president, as well as the official assets in the official residence and the personal and private residences of the president, vice-president and each of the ministers 30 days before the elected president assumes office.
- ◆ The president will vacate all official residences before the swearing-in day of the president-elect.
- ◆ The outgoing president shall terminate the employment of all political appointees made by the outgoing president, including non-career ambassadors, special assistants and aides and persons appointed to statutory boards and corporations.⁵

Liberia Executive Order 91

Liberia issued **Executive Order No. 91** in 2017 establishing the joint presidential transition team. That Executive Order (E.O.) “establish(es) mechanisms for the proper management and orderly transfer of executive power from the current administration to the incoming president.” While the E.O. was specific to 2017 and the process had not been codified through passed legislation since, it was precedent-setting, and aided in the smooth change of power between the Unity Party of President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf to the incoming administration of President-elect George M. Weah of the Coalition for Democratic Change in 2017.⁶

Liberia’s E.O. included important key provisions, including:

- ◆ Establishing a joint presidential transition team noting it will include the ministers of state for presidential affairs, justice, foreign affairs, finance and development planning, internal affairs, defense, the governor of the central bank and the director of the executive protective service. The minister of presidential affairs serves as the executive secretariat and the president and president-elect are co-chairs.
- ◆ Ensuring regular national security briefings for the president-elect during the period after the election result is certified, that every lawful step is taken to promote the orderly transition from the incumbent to the president-elect and that all government agencies provide the effective provision of services and facilities during the transition.
- ◆ Requiring the first meeting of the joint presidential transition team to take place within 48 hours of the election certification.
- ◆ Ensuring funding and that the president-elect and vice president-elect shall be provided with facilities, logistics, transportation, travel allowances, communication services, daily briefings and other services and benefits.⁷

Nigeria transition law

Nigeria has worked over the last several years to codify formal transition processes into law. Officials, in partnership with actors in civil society, have worked since 2016 to advocate for a bill,⁸ which was eventually passed in 2018 by both chambers of the Nigerian National Assembly. In 2019, Speaker of the House of Representatives, Hon. Femi Gbajabiamila, revised the bill and it is now under review by the legislature.⁹ It calls for a smooth and orderly transfer of power from one government to another, with provisions including the following:

- ◆ The president shall begin a review and analysis of budgeted expenditures during the tenure of the current president. The president will also review all other necessary documents as may be requested by the president-elect’s transition team to acquire a working knowledge of the various offices, departments, commissions, boards and other agencies of the executive arm of the federal government with a view to promote the orderly transition of the executive power within two weeks of the election.



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- ◆ The president shall constitute their transition team — who must cooperate with the president-elect and the staff he/she so designates — and provide any assistance that may be reasonably requested, whether or not the power change is within the same party or from one party to another.
- ◆ The president shall provide the president-elect with well-furnished office space, communications equipment, information technology, etc. and payment of allowances for members of the president-elect's team.
- ◆ Appointment of an administrator-general, ratified by the Senate, who shall oversee the transition after each general election. Their responsibilities shall include keeping an inventory of all assets and properties of the government, making sure they are well maintained, and ensuring that all budgetary and all other relevant documents requested by the president-elect are provided without delay. The administrator-general may recommend prosecution of any persons who breach any provision of this act.¹⁰

Republic of Korea transition law

The Republic of Korea established its **Presidential Transition Act** on February 4, 2003, and has amended it twice since the initial passage. The act establishes a comprehensive legal framework for its transfer of presidential power. The act addresses such key functions as when the president-elect may nominate candidates for prime minister and the members of the state council, the role, composition, staffing and function of a presidential transition committee; and how ministries will support the transition, logistics and oversight to ensure faithful execution of the act.

More specifically, South Korea's Presidential Transition Act establishes:

- ◆ Authority for the president-elect to nominate candidates for prime minister and members of the state council so that they can undergo personnel hearings by the National Assembly before the commencement of the presidential term.
- ◆ Creation of a presidential transition committee to assist the president-elect in carrying out affairs relevant to the transition of the presidency by ascertaining a listing of government organizations, function and budget status, preparation of policy paradigms for the new administration, and preparation for presidential inauguration, vetting the candidates of a prime minister and members of the state council. The committee will consist of 24 members, chaired by a person appointed by the president-elect and staffed by experts, to include personnel from government agencies upon request.
- ◆ Logistics support from the minister of interior and safety.
- ◆ Publication of a white paper within 30 days of the committee's close-out detailing its activities, progress and expenditures.¹¹

Mexico's evolving presidential transition norms

Mexico has successfully navigated significant changes in leadership during its last two presidential transition cycles. Some of the change has been driven by shifts in law and policy. In addition, actors have relied on internal transition norms and traditions across terms, which are not necessarily codified under law.

The presidential transition from outgoing President Felipe Calderón to incoming President Enrique Peña Nieto in 2012 and the subsequent transition from Peña Nieto to incoming President Andrés Manuel López Obrador in 2018 both were historic and successful because they reflected the will of the electorate, rule of law and cooperation leading to readiness to govern on day one.

Mexico has a uniquely long five-month transition period between election date and inauguration. This lengthy period of time does allow for comprehensive information-sharing and time for the incoming



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government to organize. It also risks confusion as to who really speaks for the nation during the lengthy national leadership change. Enrique Peña Nieto won the national presidential contest on July 1, 2012, but was not sworn into office until December 1, 2012. Andrés Manuel López Obrador was elected on July 1, 2018, and was similarly not sworn into office until on December 1, 2018.

Both transitions were historic for various reasons. Peña Nieto's Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) returned to power for the first time in 12 years after singularly holding the presidency for 70 years. Therefore, it was the first time in 82 years that the PRI's candidate was assuming the presidency from the outside. López Obrador's subsequent election in 2018 reflected victory by a candidate that lost a contested election in 2006 as a member of a party distinct from the Morena Party that carried him into office.

Peña Nieto relied on two people, Luis Videgaray and Miguel Osorio Chong to spearhead his transition. The two assembled 40 transition coordinators, each with responsibility for different policy sectors. Each coordinator recruited 10-15 aides to assist the effort. Coordinators were tasked with preparing reports on issues and government organizations, as well as offering proposals that considered the president-elect's policy stances, work to be done and budget estimates.¹²

Outgoing President Calderón designated three people, Head of the Office of the Presidency Gerardo Ruiz Mateos, Secretary of Finance José Antonio Meade and Secretary of Governance Alejandro Poire, to lead transition coordination with the incoming team. President Calderón reportedly tasked all his cabinet secretaries to prepare detailed transition reports in December 2011, about a year before Peña Nieto assumed office. The reports, known as White Books, addressed organizational layout, including descriptions of functional responsibilities, major ongoing policies or projects, relevant laws, history, results and projections, as well as pending legislation, court cases, positions to be filled and urgent issues.¹³

The incoming and outgoing transition teams had several face-to-face meetings, relying on a technical secretariat to coordinate timing, topics and logistics. The extensive cooperation was especially noteworthy given that little of it was based on specific legal frameworks. Mexican law provides direction on the length of the transition, funding and a career civil service law for managing staff change and ability to keep key civil servants, but few specifics on what information must be shared and how it should be shared.

The July 2018 election of President Andrés Manuel López Obrador was unique in how dynamic and active he was prior to formally assuming office on December 1, 2018. One month after the election, and before Mexico's Electoral Tribunal of the Federal Judicial Power certified his victory, López Obrador met with several senior foreign officials, named his cabinet-designees, held cabinet meetings with them and announced a new austerity and anti-corruption program. López Obrador met with 30 of Mexico's 32 state governors, the U.S. secretary of state, and weighed in on ongoing government



Enrique Peña Nieto, (L), is congratulated by outgoing President Felipe Calderon during the presidential inauguration ceremony at the National Congress in Mexico City, Saturday, December 1, 2012.

*Photo credit: © Alex Gonzalez/Prensa Internacional/
ZUMAPRESS.com/Alamy Stock Photo*



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programs. López Obrador publicly opposed continuation of work on a new international air terminal in Mexico City, leading the Peña Nieto government to suspend awards of four major work projects.¹⁴

President-elect López Obrador's post-electoral passage to power put great care into stagecraft and public messaging that helped him build political capital for advancing his policy goals. This was a major stylistic change for the Mexican polity.¹⁵ Historically, Mexico's swearing-in ceremony of a new president is a small, closed affair. López Obrador's swearing-in was an all-day, fully televised affair beginning with him leaving his home in a modest car accompanied by an all-volunteer civilian motorcycle escort. López Obrador's inauguration ceremony was a daylong event; in contrast, former President Felipe Calderón's 2006 inauguration was completed in four minutes due to the post-electoral crisis generated by allegations of electoral fraud by President Obrador. Choreography of the day's events was carefully managed. Mexico's most widely recognized drone photographer captured wide angle and close capture imagery that was broadcast nationally to center the people on the significance of the moment.¹⁶

Mexico's last two presidential transitions ushered in important precedents. The 2012 transition from President Calderon to Peña Nieto demonstrated how close cooperation between persons and transition teams of opposing political parties provided stability during a period of political change. The 2018 transition from President Peña Nieto to López Obrador highlighted the potential for using the transition period and inauguration day itself to establish a governing tone and build political momentum for fast action on policy priorities.

Absence of Transition Frameworks

In countries without established protocols for transition processes, candidates and presidents-elect — especially following contentious or difficult elections — are less likely to follow processes that equip future leaders with the tools necessary to assume leadership power swiftly and effectively. For example, in Argentina, experts highlighted the absence of legal protocols as a factor in the tense and unproductive 2015 transition between former President Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, and her successor, Mauricio Macri, which featured delays in government appointments and staffing, and limited access to information for incoming advisors.¹⁷



In summary, the scope, scale and context of various national legal frameworks reflect a range of inputs. **Ghana's Presidential Transition Act of 2012, Liberia's E.O. of 2017 and Nigeria's draft Presidential Transition Act** give emphasis to an accurate and full accounting of government properties and official holdings to ensure outgoing officials do not profit personally from their time in office. Ghana's act makes sure the transition team composition is balanced between the incoming and outgoing administrations. It also ensures comprehensive information-sharing so that the incoming president has access to national security information during the transition period. All three nations call for oversight in various forms. Liberia's E.O. includes a unique mechanism for dispute resolution during the transition process. Nigeria's proposed legal framework puts a Senate-ratified person in charge of the transition. South Korea's legal framework adds provisions on getting the prime minister and minister-designate nominations before parliament for confirmation prior to inauguration day.



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President-elect

Presidents-elect are successful candidates chosen by the people to lead the government. They have earned a unique trust and hold tremendous responsibility. They will be the **final authority on key decisions**, other than what they chose to delegate to subordinates to act on their behalf. The most precious commodity for incoming and outgoing presidents-elect is time. Presidents-elect will determine how much time they want to spend on policy, politics and process, and it is up to subordinates to optimize that apportionment.

Presidents-elect must articulate priorities and choices so the machinery of government can act, the public can be informed, oversight can be conducted and foreign relations managed. Presidents-elect will have their own unique work style, including their preferred manner for receiving information, who should be in meetings and how they articulate decisions. It is up to the rest of the government to adjust to the presidents-elects' work style. Presidents-elect **set the tone** for how the government will act during transitions. This is as true for the incoming and outgoing presidents. Preferably there is a strong, specific rule set for how to act during transitions, but the earnestness of action is established by the elected official themselves. The incoming president should reach out to the outgoing president to acknowledge their service and demonstrate respect for the office. This outreach can also serve to note there is only one authorized head of state at a time and a joint commitment to pursue a professional transfer of power.

President-elect's transition team

Given the many decisions incoming leaders must make in order to **prepare to govern effectively from day one**, most presidents-elect establish or build out robust transition teams to support their transition. The transition team needs executive leadership, a designated head of the effort and strong staffing from career civil servants and possibly a few political appointees. The transition effort is a multi-disciplined endeavor so the transition team will need strong competence, in planning, writing, communications, accounting, legal affairs (and ethics compliance officers), policy, budgeting, finance and programming, management, leadership, political acumen, legislative and judicial relations, government decision-making processes and interagency collaboration, and a host of subject matter specialists. The size of the transition team will vary based on the size of government and requirements, in addition to any national norms or traditions that exist for transitions, but the skill sets necessary for transition competence are broadly universal for all presidential transitions.



The president-elect of El Salvador Sánchez Cerén (R) meets with Salvadoran President Mauricio Funes (L), along with the presidential transition teams in San Salvador city, capital of El Salvador, March 17, 2014.

Photo credit: © Oscar Rivera/
Xinhua/Alamy Live News



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Outgoing president

In a democratic system, the **outgoing president will be expected to acknowledge the outcome of an election**, facilitate full cooperation for the transition and gracefully exit the stage after inauguration. The smooth transfer of power depends on the attitudes and actions of the outgoing administration, beginning with the president. While the outgoing president should set the right tone, other senior administration officials must follow suit by seeking to be helpful to the president-elect and the incoming team. Adherence to binding rules and establishing rapport with the incoming team will allow for the invaluable transfer of substantive and process knowledge. The outgoing and incoming teams should have formal mechanisms for exchanges, and both sides should be professional, respectful and focused on the national interest. The goal is to ensure that the incoming president will be as prepared as possible to assume control of the government on day one.

The primary principle for outgoing administrations is that it ensures **uniform access to transition information and assistance** to all eligible candidates. The incumbent president must ensure that each candidate's transition team receives an equal offer of material, assistance, access and guidance. As a general rule, outgoing administrations should share early and often and do so in a systematic and auditable way. This process should begin with a transparent and clear legal framework that mandates information-sharing. Absent a legal framework, sharing is dependent on the goodwill of outgoing presidents and their administration. Even in nations with a strong history of peaceful and cooperative transfers of power, reliance on goodwill alone could fall victim to the interests of a sitting president to see a preferred candidate be elected the next president. This impulse could lead to real or perceived bias in their treatment of less-preferred candidates.

Transition Checklist for the Incumbent President	
Before the election	After the election
<ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ Establish an office of presidential transition◆ Designate a federal coordinator◆ Set transition guidelines and policies◆ Engage and support qualified candidates on an equitable basis◆ Direct ministries to prepare handover materials on key policy items and priorities◆ Archival and recordkeeping	<ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ Provide transition facilities◆ Conduct detailed briefings◆ Host joint exercises with new team◆ Provide access to all government entities, information and requested personnel◆ Complete closeout tasks like document retention and handover materials◆ Critical for administrations to be required to make and maintain records from their term as president

Outgoing president's transition team

The outgoing administration's transition team should have a central hub with satellite transition teams at each ministry and government entity. Satellite transition teams should be responsive to guidance from the central hub. Appointing an overall executive head of the transition and heads of satellite transition teams maximizes efficiency, coordination and collaboration in planning and execution. The head of the outgoing president's transition should be a well-respected, experienced person with a reputation for **working across party lines** and proficiency in government operations. Finding such a person sets the tone that the transition is respected, treated seriously and that a successful transition is in the national interest.



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Appointing a highly political head of transition, and/or heads of satellite transition teams, known first and foremost for personal loyalty to the outgoing president, will heighten the risk of perceptions that information is being withheld or that the interests of the party are overriding the interests of the nation.

Career civil servants should make up the majority of the outgoing president's transition team staff. Career civil servants have much at stake in ensuring a smooth handover of authority, and in establishing a trusting rapport with qualified candidates, presidents-elect and their incoming transition team. Career civil servants have the added benefit of likely having been involved in prior presidential transitions and can draw on what seems to have been most or least beneficial in the past. Political appointees may not have these same interests (or past experience being involved in transitions), especially if they are being asked to collaborate across party lines. Political appointees are important in the setting of expectations, and there is only one authorized government at a time, but political appointees' role in staffing outgoing transition teams should be limited.

Political appointees

Political appointees are persons selected to **carry-out the agenda** and vision of the elected official. They are chosen for their expertise, effectiveness, policy, trust and political alignment with the president. They are the layer between the office holder and apolitical career officials. They are expected to abide by all government laws and regulations while they oversee execution of the president's agenda and provide sound advice and counsel. Political appointees normally bring a range of experiences and should **reflect the diversity of the country**. Some political appointees may be junior in rank and/or have limited experience working in government. Others will be persons with long-standing prior governmental and substantive experience.

Appointees range from cabinet officials to policy coordinators. Some may serve in the president's core executive leadership staff, while others may support in an advisory capacity as members of the civil service. While the process of becoming a political appointee and the specific organizational role of appointees during a president's tenure is discussed later in this guide, the importance of choosing strong political appointees to ensure execution of the president's agenda cannot be overstated. Effective political appointees will seek close working ties with other political appointees, especially at peer and more senior levels. Most appointees serve at the pleasure of the president and can be asked to resign if the president, or more senior ranking political officials, lose confidence in their ability to faithfully execute the laws of the nation and advance the president's agenda. Political appointees also will need to foster strong ties to career civil servants. Political appointees are expected to balance new vision with respect for the history of organizations and the people who serve them from one president to the next.

Career officials/civil servants

Career civil servants, sometimes known as the permanent bureaucracy, are apolitical professional staff responsible for day-to-day government operations and mission execution. Career civil servants, and the civil service more generally is a crucial function in ensuring the sustainability of government operations and service delivery during a transition. Career officials generally are **most expert** in how to carry out tasks; the processes for coordination and collaboration, the historical background of issues and the efficacy of past policy decisions, **maintaining and understanding records**, serving on the front lines of headquarters and field operations and connecting instruction to action. They are expected to serve presidents and political appointees equally while those persons are in public service and adjust their operating style to the preferences of new teams. In many cases, career civil servants have made public service their lifetime occupation. They have their own career advancement objectives, networks and relationships, and their own perspectives on policy, process and personnel. Most civil servants understand that political appointees might or might not have a background in government or the issues they are brought in to advance, and that it is their job to help political appointees be successful. Civil servants often recognize that they need to establish trusting relations



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with political appointees, since having that trust will help them gain and maintain access to the new decision-makers. Civil servants often walk a fine line in wanting to have good rapport with political appointees, but not going too far and appearing to be political themselves. Career officials will need to work with the next president too, and some professional distance is necessary.

Office of presidential transition

Specifically, the outgoing administration will stand up a formal office of presidential transition. The office of presidential transition should be given appropriate office space and support staff, including IT and communications tools, to do its work effectively. The office should be physically distant from the main working space of the office of the president to increase the perception that it is apolitical and not an operating arm of the president. Physical separation will serve as a demonstrable example to the nation that the president supports an effective transition. Physical separation also will increase the comfort of opposition party transition teams to meet in-person and maintain professional focus on transition planning only. It will provide the current president's team emotional space from day-to-day operations of government as well.

The **office of presidential transition should be stood up about one year before the end of a president's term**. Depending on national law, this timeframe will allow the office to be operational and effective on the day qualified candidates are allowed to receive transition support. The office of presidential transition should operate quietly, but it will need a robust set of skilled professionals. It should include persons with outstanding credentials in law, oversight, budget and finance, communications, information technology, government decision-making processes, protocol, security, information-sharing, briefing, and presentational development and planning. The role of the office of presidential transition is to be the **primary point of entry for senior members of candidate teams**, once the election process deems persons to be qualified for transition support.

This office will ensure that all necessary preparation takes place for a smooth transition of power and serves as the front line of communication and coordination for the office of the president.

This office will:

- ◆ Play a significant role in gathering and disseminating information about how the actual office of the president manages personnel and staffing issues
- ◆ Oversee processes for requesting security clearances, including how they are determined and issued
- ◆ Determine what office space and other logistics support will be provided to each qualified candidate
- ◆ Facilitate communication with specific ministries and other executive branch entities

In addition to creating structure and processes for how the current government will be ready to support the transition, the office will need to spell out the terms of access for the president-elect's team to federal facilities, information and personnel, unless otherwise specified by law.

It is important to note that the **office of presidential transitions serves as the organizing entity for the executive branch** as a whole. It should issue specific guidance, consistent with national law, to government ministries and key entities on how each will support the transition process. This guidance should direct ministries to establish their own offices of transition affairs and identify the head of these offices. The guidance should provide formal rules for communication, the establishment of an inter-ministry coordinating body, how often that body will meet, the scope of its authority and work and the strategic and specific actions that ensure effective communications with qualified candidates. The office of presidential transition should meet individually with qualified candidates and their small coterie of advisors, and interface on a regular schedule with transition planning teams in ministries and key government entities.



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Ministry transition planning offices

Each executive branch ministry should be directed to create its own transition planning office run by a trusted coordinator. Transition efforts within ministries should follow a predictable flow from tasking and coordinating transition papers, to meeting with qualified candidates as appropriate and as approved by law and the office of presidential transitions. Ministry transition teams should receive and engage closely with the president-elect's "landing teams"¹⁸ as soon as permissible after election results are announced. Given the allegiance of political appointees to the current president, it is preferable for most of the ministry transition planning office to be staffed by senior career officials. The head of ministry transition planning offices can be a political appointee, but also could be a senior career official. Officials assigned to this task should work full time on transition efforts. Persons working in ministry transition offices will be responsible for the tasking, coordinating and sharing of briefing materials to the office of presidential transition at first, and directly to the president-elect's landing teams after the election and before inauguration. The office of presidential transition will give guidance to ministry transition offices on what, when and how to prepare briefing materials for qualified candidate teams. Initial emphasis should be placed on having ministries and key executive branch entities prepare papers on activities, strategy and plans, policies, budgets, key decision points, upcoming activities and organizational structure. Ensuring **uniform format and coordination standards** across ministry briefing books is essential. Format unity makes it easier to digest large volumes of information and for the reader to know where to find additional information, as needed. Format unity also looks professional and reflects care and effort by drafting entities. This guide will provide more detail on the substantive tasking process and formatting of materials later in the document.

External influencers

Influencers around the government play an outsized role in shaping, validating and informing presidential transitions. Influencers typically have a personal, business, and/or a professional relationship with either (or both) the current or incoming president and their senior-most inner circle. Influencers have a voice that helps set priorities, public messaging and personnel appointments. They can be a go-between the outgoing and incoming teams. Influencers do not have a formal role in transitions. For this reason, they can add complications for official transition teams because they are not subject to approved transition protocols for engaging senior officials. They often have quiet, informal roles that can run counter to what the official system recommends. Formal, senior advisers to the incoming and outgoing presidents often try to cultivate relationships with influencers because of their real or perceived leverage. Influencers often have multiple motivations. They might have a personal policy, regulatory, financial, appointment or other objective. They could be dispassionate friends looking out solely for the interest of the elected official. They may operate quietly or openly in the media to shape public opinion. Sometimes influencers end up in official positions or serving on presidential advisory boards as rewards for good counsel and loyalty.

Transitions in Benin

Since the beginning of its democratic transition in 1991, Benin has experienced several successful executive transitions thanks to political will and mutual efforts by outgoing and incoming leaders to plan for a peaceful transfer of power.¹⁹ However, under current President Patrice Talon, elected in 2016, there are growing concerns over democratic backsliding in Benin. In 2018, Benin's election commission changed the financial requirements to run for office. Parties looking to field candidates in the 2021 presidential election will have to pay a total of more than \$400,000 (an increase of 1,500 percent) compared to the previous elections. The country will hold presidential elections in 2021. The political opposition and civil society in Benin have voiced concerns that because of the new requirements, these elections could be held without any credible opposition candidate.²⁰



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Crisis management

Crisis management means being prepared to respond appropriately to crises whenever they arise, oftentimes unexpectedly. Whether the crises are natural disasters, traumatic accidents, political policy or personality based, each contingency needs to have a plan.

Crises can occur at any time, and range from any of the following:

- ◆ A trauma which involves a loss of life or property damage; natural disasters (floods, fires, earthquakes, etc.) industrial accidents, fire, health disasters, pandemics, epidemics, etc.
- ◆ Damage to reputation, which may include criminal activity by officials or employees, scandals such as charges of racism, sexual harassment or affairs, etc.
- ◆ Changes in policy promises, controversial endorsement of an issue or individual
- ◆ National or international conflict, terrorism, boycotts, data or information tampering

Successful transitions include **readiness to deal with potential or unexpected crises from day one**. This is perhaps one of the most important aspects of ensuring a smooth transition process, as a state that is not adequately staffed, governed or operational may be vulnerable to national security risks. A crisis event is one in which the government must effectively mobilize to address and mitigate. Crises are not part of the regular workflow. New governments must be ready to meet the needs of the people on an urgent basis.

Planning and training for crises is the best way to ensure responses are effective. Persons coming into government may not be familiar with the specific requirements, protocols and legal constraints associated with managing crises from within the executive branch and will need immediate training. Crisis management usually involves operating with insufficient information and risk associated with all decision options. Sometimes risk is obvious. Other times it is longer-term because it sets precedent that could encourage good or bad behavior for the next crisis. By definition, crises are acute events that require close attention, consequential outcomes and reliance on actions and decisions by a range of actors.

Developing playbooks for what to do during a crisis is imperative. **Playbooks** can be useful in identifying the key actors — and their authorities and delegated responsibilities — on particular issues, the known and expected dynamics during different types of events, etc. Transition teams should read and understand these playbooks well, so they are ready on day one to advise the president on options during exigent circumstances. Playbooks will not provide answers for what to do, but they do give vital framing for how to do it and why to do it.

It is recommended that the outgoing administration organize a crisis management exercise for the incoming team. The substance of the exercise will matter less than the orientation to the organs of power and decision-making processes the new team will need to master. It will also signal readiness to the public and resolve to foreign adversaries.

Effective management of an early crisis handled is of great benefit to the nation and new president, whereas poor management can reduce the new president's political capital and ability to advance their agenda. The **outgoing administration has a key role to play as it relates to crisis preparedness**. It will most likely have legal obligations, such as for records retention, information-sharing, preparation of briefing books, orientation events and status reports for the incoming teams to public messaging about the peaceful transfer of power being a vital element of representative government, to vacating government homes and offices to finding post-presidency jobs. In some circumstances, outgoing



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officials will be under legal obligations not to engage in certain actions, such as working with hostile powers, and be subject to financial audits due to questionable earnings for themselves or those around them while in office. More likely, the incoming team will have many questions on process and substance, and effective transitions compel cooperation and full disclosure if the nation is to prosper from one president to the next. Some of this engagement will be specified in law or policy, but much will be because it is a norm and simply action in the best interest of the nation.

Chile's Transition Post-Earthquake

In 2010, the Chilean presidential election resulted in the first handover of leadership power between opposing political coalitions in two decades. While in the midst of planning how opposing sides would come together to smoothly transition the presidency, and just 12 days before the president-elect was scheduled to take power, a massive earthquake and tsunami shook Chile killing more than 500 people and costing billions in damage. With no legally mandated handover processes, the transition itself depended on the commitment of outgoing President Michelle Bachelet and incoming President Sebastián Piñera to work together to exchange information and plan for the transition. Further, as the first time the ruling coalition Concertación was forced to hand over the government to a competing coalition since the democratic transition started in 1990, the continuity of information that had been shared within the coalition had been “amongst friends”²¹ as one staffer put it, forcing the coalition to reformulate in order to share across parties. The earthquake's impact on an already difficult transition forced senior aides and officials from the outgoing administration and incoming administration's transition team to meet frequently to pass information and formulate a recovery plan based on available resources and programs. The outgoing and incoming teams also worked together to ensure key officials were in place to ensure ministries could deliver security and emergency resources to the nation's hardest-hit communities. Despite these complexities, scholars and those involved in the transition agree it was relatively smooth. Overall, they credit the cooperation between the two leaders, especially on matters of security and crisis management in the midst of a devastating event in the country, as paramount to the success of the overall handover.²²



In Chile, outgoing President Sebastián Piñera congratulates President Michelle Bachelet after Bachelet was sworn into office in Valparaíso, March 11, 2014.

Photo credit: Ivan Alvarado, Reuters/Alamy Stock Photo

National security planning

Linked to crisis planning is the responsibility for national defense and foreign policy. The handover of authority of national security institutions from one government to the next is complex, especially in circumstances where the levers of security have been politicized by the outgoing government. The power dynamics between incoming, outgoing and a country's standing national security apparatus is fraught with risk for all involved, and transition teams will want to give great care to managing the handover of authority.



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Many nations have formal national security councils that cluster together all security institutions for routine and exigent circumstances. Some nations have a national security advisor responsible for ensuring collaboration and synergy in policy option development. Brazil, for example, relies on a National Defense Council to advise the president on matters of war and peace, state of siege or federal intervention²³ and proposing the criteria and conditions for use of force.²⁴ Brazil's National Defense Council is composed of relevant ministers and advisors. It is important for incoming transition teams to engage with these types of bodies for overview briefings and understanding of institutional dynamics between and among national security stakeholders.

Security institutions have a special responsibility to be as apolitical as possible because they have been entrusted with the potential means to suppress, intimidate and release compromising information on persons perceived as hostile to their interests. Conversely, security officials may be in the difficult position of having information about corruption and corrupt persons that they cannot divulge absent legal protocols, and might feel caught between changing political winds. They also know activities authorized as legal by the previous government may be viewed differently by the new team.

Complicating national security planning during the campaign and time between election and inauguration periods is the **control and dissemination of classified information** to only a small subset of the campaign and transition teams. The transition team will want to designate an appropriate number of persons to be granted security clearances.

Transition teams should begin by taking inventory of the size, scale and scope of national security institutions, including a listing of all authorities, capabilities and on-going activities. Most national security institutions are unlikely to share highly sensitive, operational information with candidate transition team officials, but will be prepared to provide an accounting for most — but not all — programmatic actions to appropriately cleared team officials once the candidate is certified as president-elect.

A few nations have established policies and legal frameworks for the sharing of sensitive, national security information with candidates and select members of their team. Where this is not the case, transition teams will want to make clear to the outgoing administration the importance of the new team given access to classified programs and information prior to inauguration day, while recognizing there is but one commander-in-chief at a time.

It is preferable for transition teams to include national security experts with prior executive branch experience for day-to-day management of this transition line of work. Such persons will have historical familiarity with secretive institutions and the activities conducted within. Career security officials are likely to feel reassured to know the incoming team has people of substantive heft expected to lead their organizations, recognizing it is the right and prerogative of the incoming team to select whomever it chooses to lead transition engagements with national security institutions.

The most critical variable in transition planning with respect to national security institutions is access to sensitive information. Security institutions may give candidates broad briefings on threat and their missions, but few, if any, on the campaign team will have specific information regarding sensitive programs, counter-threat missions, and what and how internal and external security information is collected, analyzed and retained. The **transition team will need to have its own classified**



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information storage facility, or have an arrangement to keep briefing materials, plans and notes safely in appropriate executive branch space. Similarly, it will need means to identify a reasonable number of cleared persons needing access to classified information. It will also need to ensure their background investigations are conducted expeditiously, and clearances issued, so evaluation and planning work can be done in the run-up to inauguration day.

A vital subset activity is **transition leadership and select staff being briefed and ready to execute continuity in government and continuity of operations plans during an exigent circumstance**, like a major terrorism event in the nation's capital. Inauguration day represents excitement and hope for the majority of the electorate, but enemies at home and abroad could view this moment as an opportunity. Security planners know that protecting government's leaders requires response and relocation tasks that rely on senior leaders' cooperation and readiness. While all national continuity in government and continuity of operations plans have some commonality, they reflect national characteristics, capabilities and rules that are subject to modification by new governments. The incoming team will want to have information regarding plans through the end of the outgoing president's term, and be ready to adjust and implement those plans quite early after assuming office, as appropriate.

Likewise, outgoing presidents play an especially important role in conveying the most sensitive information to incoming presidents, especially about the intent and framework of ongoing national security activities. The outgoing president likely will have conveyed a bevy of views directly to foreign friends and adversaries about national intentions, and the new president should have full awareness of what was proffered. Outgoing presidents can assist the new president by offering views on the immediacy of threats and perspectives of what have proven to be effective or ineffective courses of action to mitigate challenges to the nation. This handover is especially vital during periods of crisis, foreign occupation or civil unrest. It is incumbent, therefore, on the president-elect to task the incoming transition team with drawing up a list of who on their transition team truly needs access to sensitive, operational information, who will need more generalized, classified information, and who has no need-to-know prior to becoming governing officials. Erring toward keeping access to only those who really need access will garner trust with national security officials and set the new administration on stronger footing once the president-elect is fully in charge of the nation's national security institutions.

Outgoing presidents can assist the new president by offering views on the immediacy of threats and perspectives of what have proven to be effective or ineffective courses of action to mitigate challenges to the nation.

Indonesia's Presidential Transition of 2014

In 2014, following a 30-year period of authoritarian rule, President Joko Widodo (Jokowi) was elected president of Indonesia. The transition between Jokowi and his predecessor, president Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, though potentially tenuous, given the events leading up to the election, resulted in information-sharing and coordination between both administrations. For example, outgoing president Yudhoyono tasked the director of his information delivery unit to work with the incoming president's transition team to provide an overview of key government policies and programs. Throughout the transition, other ministries followed suit in sharing information on key issues and programs in government. Despite a difficult and fraught election period, the 2014 transition, as a result of the cooperation between the outgoing and incoming leaders, demonstrated cooperation and cohesion throughout the handover.²⁵



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Strategic planning for the short- and long-term

Strategic planning is a critical part of the transition effort, as it allows for leaders-elect and their teams to **craft a set of priorities and vision for the leader to address the moment they assume office.**

This strategic plan will set the course for the leader's efforts on policy and services for the nation, and provide a roadmap on which the governance will act. Though some incoming leaders may inherit a government strategic planning process from the prior administration (or choose to align their priorities and initiatives with the strategic plan of the prior administration), many new governments will also want to reevaluate the scope, scale and core questions associated with those processes to ensure it reflects the new leader's vision and priorities.

Transition teams will want to designate strategic planners and have them work with some intellectual distance from day-to-day operations. Strategic planners will work to understand the candidate/president-elect's vision and assist in aligning resources to task.

Strategic planning is a worthwhile endeavor in itself, especially if it seeks input from the government as a whole. Doing so will increase stakeholder buy-in when final planning documents are published. Strategic planning will have some importance during the campaign, but should be **central to the post-election and early days of the new administration** period. The executive branch will continue to operate as-is after inauguration unless it is engaged in the planning process and given clear guidance going forward. The planning process does not end when the elected official's strategic vision, mission and strategy are produced.



Effective strategic planning gives significant attention to oversight and implementation, measurements and metrics for success, such as key performance indicators (KPIs) and performance measures, are needed to give the planning process enforcement capacity. Identifying and relying on KPIs and performance measures are commonly used in the for-profit and non-profit sectors. They are especially useful in non-profit sectors since measuring output can be difficult to quantify numerically. For example, national security institutions cannot measure how effective and efficient they are simply by the absence of a bad event taking place. Doing so could lead to imprecise projections for new or more capabilities. Measurements need to be more tangible. They could focus on the amount of troop training and equipment needs being met, for example. Having appropriate, tailored KPIs and performance measures allows for more precise trade-off analysis and investment of scarce government resources.



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Sample Strategic Plan Exercise

Now that you have been selected as a minister, your responsibility is to put in place a viable workable ministry that, according to the Constitution and operating procedures of the government, will:

- Develop government policy and implement national budgets;
- Prepare and initiate government legislation for introduction to parliament;
- Implement and administer acts of parliament;
- Coordinate the functions of government ministries; and
- Perform any other functions provided for by the charter of an act of parliament, except those reserved for the president.

In order to perform those duties, you must first organize your ministry according to the following guidelines:

- Determine the three major issues that your ministry will oversee and deliver. If possible, list the issues by district. (What research will be required to determine these issues? While these issues may differ from district to district, which are the most important ones for all of the country? List three.)
- Prioritize those major issues.
- Determine how you will address these problems. What needs to be done in terms of the steps to be taken?
- What tasks need to be accomplished?
- Who will you need to coordinate with, and who will be assisting with this project?
- How many staff will be needed in your ministry, and what positions are the most important?
- What is the time frame for accomplishing this, and what are the timelines month by month?
- What are the projected costs, and what is the source of that money?

Source: NDI Executive Office Toolkit, (June 2009).

Asset tracking between administrations

Asset tracking of official property and goods is a fundamental responsibility of the government. Government assets are items purchased with public funds for public officials to use in their official capacity for government tasks. Government assets can include office supplies, official residences, vehicles, phones, computers and gifts given to persons in their official capacity. Corruption and inappropriate expropriation of public funds is a global challenge and the detailed **tracking and tracing** of who in government has been provided gifts because of their official service is important for healthy democracies. Outgoing administrations should know who has a loaned government office, home, phone, computer, printer, etc. and who has or has not returned them when they depart office.

Governments should have systematic hardware and software tools to track government assets and ensure they are returned to government possession at the end of an administration.²⁶





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Many nations, such as Nigeria, require outgoing administrations to track and trace assets in their national transition laws. Asset tracking and inventory oversight are complex tasks, best done and monitored throughout an administration's period in office. This job normally falls to **inventory accounting teams** in management and oversight. The task can begin with the basics of documenting items issued to government officials and scanning them in with a barcode counter so they can be cataloged electronically. These teams should continue to regularly account for government-issued items and document when individuals report them lost, stolen or broken. Basic software can help identify patterns of persons often reporting missing government-issued items.

Asset tracking includes the often politically-sensitive job of ensuring no one in government is leaving service with ill-begotten gains, such as gifts of a certain value that belong to the government, or furniture, homes and cars issued to senior government officials.

Political appointees may not be familiar with rules of responsibility for being issued government items. Nations may find it helpful to provide briefings to political appointees when they are first issued government items like laptops and phones that highlight their rights and responsibilities for what they may do on government-owned items and what responsibilities they have in case items are lost, stolen or compromised. Agency offices of legal advisors can assist in the preparation of these materials.

Asset tracking goes beyond tracking and retaking control of government-issued office materials like phones and laptops. Asset tracking also includes the often **politically sensitive job** of ensuring no one in government is leaving service with ill-begotten gains, such as gifts of a certain value that belong to the government; or furniture, homes and cars issued to senior government officials.

Governments may wish to rely on internal oversight offices working closely with legal advisors, as well as accounting and finance specialists to make determinations about the status of unreturned items or items returned with significant damage. Legal and accounting advisors can be relied upon to determine whether an item presented to government officials are above well-defined dollar values requiring them to be purchased by outgoing officials, or if they must remain the property of the government after a persons' public service ends.

The incoming and outgoing teams will have responsibilities for tracking assets, like official gifts, computers and property that they have temporarily accustomed or had custodial ownership of as candidates on transition teams or as outgoing office holders. National laws will specify rules for **accounting of assets** and how items should be documented and transferred to the appropriate custodian of government property, so transition teams will want to conduct a legal review for understanding what asset tracking they must do, and how the tracking is to be done. Ghanaian law, for example, is especially specific on the inventory of assets.

Incoming transition teams will be provided with increasingly more assets as they shift from campaign to the pre-inauguration period. Staff will need to be assigned responsibility for overseeing and executing asset tracking tasks. Having basic spreadsheets or more advanced assignment tools, barcodes for tracking and inventory review protocols are a needed capability for transition management staff. Being unable to fully account for government-issued items would reflect badly on the new team, potentially reducing some precious political capital in unnecessary ways.

Asset inventory and reporting will be far more burdensome on outgoing governments. There may also be circumstances where outgoing government officials reject determinations that they return items and/or pay for items lost or damaged beyond reasonable repair. These matters ideally can be resolved



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amicably at the agency-level, but if not, may need to be referred to government-wide law enforcement, prosecuting and judicial officials.

Legislative branches can be helpful in ensuring compliance with asset tracking and management requirements for both incoming and outgoing leaders and staff. Legislative branches can mandate, for oversight purposes, the outgoing administration produce a timely asset inventory list. Doing so reduces the space for corrupt practices to go unnoticed or unaddressed. It also can spur on the establishment of legal frameworks for addressing what to do when outgoing officials are in non-compliance.

Working with the civil service

The **civil service is the backbone of government operations**. Civil servants are government career professionals, who are responsible for providing operational and administrative guidance and support to the government despite shifts in leadership power. Civil servants are **objective, non-partisan agents of the government**, whose mandate is to ensure operational sustainability, knowledge management and service delivery.

Incoming transition teams should expect to work with civil servants assigned to support the transition from the side of the agency. Typically, these civil servants provide the dual function of being a liaison to specific subject matter expert civil servants residing elsewhere in ministries, and also expertise themselves on how their ministries operate on a day-to-day basis. Civil servants assigned to work directly with incoming transition team officials are expected to be apolitical and committed institutionally to representing only the interests and equities of ministries and other government agencies. Likewise, specific civil service agencies will have outsized roles in assisting the outgoing president with a successful transition. For example, civil service agencies with missions of government logistics, asset accounting, personnel, real estate management, payroll, ethics and training will have ongoing operational roles engaging campaigns and the president-elect's transition team.

Civil servants usually are the ones writing transition briefing books and often the ones making presentations to the incoming team. Civil servants recognize they may be mistrusted or belittled by campaign teams, especially those with little prior experience actually governing. Nations differ on whether career civil servants are assigned to assist transition teams on a daily basis. Campaign and president-elect teams may find it beneficial to have some civil servants working nearby at least some of the time. Having some civil servants close by — but not actually co-locating — with campaigns can help transition teams know what kind of questions to ask and whom the questions should be directed toward.

Political and campaign teams often have little experience working with civil servants and too often make distrustful assumptions about the loyalty and earnestness of them. Career civil servants often view incoming teams with trepidation because they have been through many transitions and will have had to prove their competence and usefulness once again to the incoming team.

Regardless of how transition teams feel about the civil service, and the civil service feels about the transition team, both sides need each other to be successful. The transition team needs to learn about the specific processes and procedures for leading government activities, as well as ingest historical knowledge from the permanent bureaucracy about historical engagements and past deliberations of policy debates. The civil service needs to learn what information is most important to the incoming team, what its priorities will be and who the key decision makers are. Mutual respect of the roles and responsibilities of the other is essential.

Transition teams and political appointees will have higher decision-making authority in government in most circumstances, so it is incumbent on the new team to engage the civil service early in their



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tenure so their thought processes are understood and decisions are faithfully executed. Many incoming leaders will hold a “town hall” with career civil servants to introduce themselves and their priorities. This process can give career civil servants assurance that their service is respected, that legal and policy processes will be followed and that civil servants will have a chance to assist in their areas of expertise going forward.

Executive-legislative relations

Relations between the executive and legislative branches are at times challenging, given they reflect a check and balance on the activities of the other. Legislators are **elected to develop policy that aligns with the interests of the people** and provide oversight and parameters for executive branch behavior. Executive branches are designed to implement those policies, lead government operations and therefore advance the national interest.

Both sides have roles to play and rule sets in which they are authorized to operate. The level of friction can rise or fall based on how much both sides show respect for the role of the other, adhere to traditions and norms and cultivate constructive working relationships.

Incoming administrations will want to **develop strong working ties with the legislative branch**, including with members of opposition parties, to the maximum extent practicable. Cultivating good working relations with the legislative branch means building and maintaining a strong legislative liaison team and adhering to consistent processes for engagement, information-sharing and conduct in response to oversight. The candidate’s legislative liaison team ideally will be led by a person with an established relationship with the candidate/president-elect so legislators and their staff have confidence that they are speaking with authority, as well as extensive background and ties with legislators.

Transition teams will want to expend effort building the foundations of good ties with the legislative branch, to include identifying persons who can be effective liaison officers for each executive branch, ministry and agency. The head of legislative engagement will want to maintain **strong coordination across ministry/agency liaison officers** by, among other things, building a database that documents meetings, information provided to the legislative branch, the status of legislative actions and anything else relevant.

Many outgoing administrations will have dedicated **legislative liaison offices** in the office of the president and at ministries. These offices will be beneficial focal points for legislative inquiries on the status of transition law compliance. Distrust between legislative liaisons of differing campaigns is to be expected and it is unlikely that they work closely with those from opposing campaigns or parties during or after election season. Outgoing legislative liaison offices should have full authority to speak for the executive branch until the formal transfer of presidential power takes place and a new team assumes office. Most likely, legislative liaison offices of outgoing administrations will be in wind-down mode after the next president is certified to lead the next government.

Working with the judiciary in a transition

The primary role of the judicial branch during the transition most likely will be centered on adjudicating challenges to the election outcome and compliance requirements national law imposes on the incoming and outgoing teams. If legal challenges are made, national law will dictate the processes and procedures for matters ranging from how to request a hearing, provide witnesses and evidence, representation and appeals.

Transition teams will need to be vigilant about complying with all legal requirements by ensuring that the transition’s legal teams conduct legal sufficiency reviews on internal operations, policies and procedures, protection of sensitive, privileged and classified information, and for record retention,



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expenditures, obligations and external engagements. Some nations may offer judicial branch advisory services to assist and inform the transition of national law requirements.

It is incumbent on the transition team's legal staff to proactively inform the rest of the team of its legal obligations, such as, for example, regarding how they are to comport themselves on government-provided commodities like laptops, phones and official cars. Campaign and transition teams should be reminded that their activities conducted on official property or goods will be subject to all oversight.

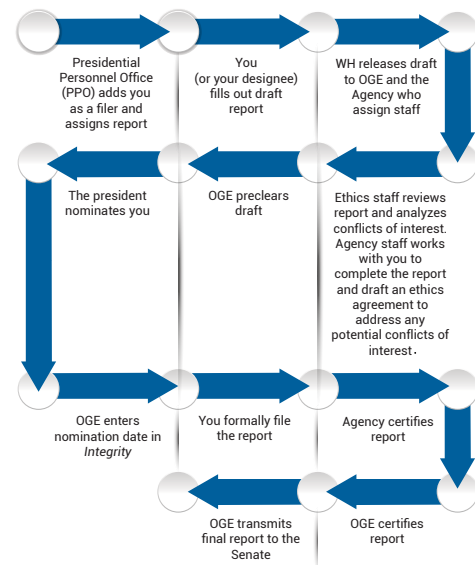
Senior leaders of the transition team may wish to issue written and oral guidance reminders to subordinates to ensure judicial matters are treated formally and seriously. Transition team hiring officers may wish to include written materials to new staff so the new staff is aware of legal requirements they must adhere to going forward. These materials can be classified as "ethics rules." Such ethics rules might include determinations on earning money from entities with government-related businesses, financial disclosure requirements, permissible activities while in transition work space or using transition team-owned items and obligations on post-transition team employment.

Government Ethics in the U.S. Transition Process

In the United States, the Office of Government Ethics (OGE) plays a central role in every presidential transition, both in the time leading up to the election and following a leader's first few months in office. OGE is primarily responsible for reviewing financial disclosure reports of presidential candidates and nominees and assessing any potential conflicts of interest.

The agency works with all presidential candidates and nominees, regardless of party or affiliation. This is intended to advance a culture of ethics and uphold the integrity of the executive office above all else. By law, all presidential and vice-presidential candidates are required by law to file financial disclosure reports annually to OGE "within 30 days after becoming a candidate for nomination or election,"²⁷ or at least 30 days before an election. Further, all U.S. Senate-confirmable presidential nominees are required to submit financial disclosures ahead of their nomination hearings. Members of the general public may request copies of presidential candidate and nominee financial disclosures through the OGE.^{28 29}

NOMINEE PROCESS FLOWCHART



Inter-office/agency coordination and mechanics

The office of the presidency relies on close communication and predictable, well-understood processes and procedures for operating internally and across government. Decision-making often will be done on tight deadlines and with incomplete information, so it is incumbent upon all who support the president to maximize opportunities to leverage reliable sources of information and understand potential outcomes and impacts of decisions taken.



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Every president and cabinet official will have their own way for receiving and processing information, but there are critical tools and procedures for harnessing the power of government for positive effect. Leaders-elect and their transition teams will want to **establish a sound internal coordination system** and mechanisms during the transition to ensure that as soon as they assume the leadership post, they are prepared to share and access information quickly and effectively between offices and departments. Candidate and president-elect transition teams should become knowledgeable of the procedures and persons leading ministry executive secretariats so they understand the logical focal points for seeking information from ministries.

As noted earlier, most government entities have executive secretariats to manage coordination of materials, tasking assignments and transmission of invitations, meeting announcements, foreign travel and requests, and documents from one government entity to another. Most often, the office of the president's executive secretariat is the highest-ranking executive secretariat because its customer is the president himself.

Candidate and president-elect transition teams should become knowledge of the procedures and persons leading ministry executive-secretariats so they will understand the logical focal points for seeking information from ministries.

Executive secretariats should be expected to establish rules and procedures for how information is to be received, processed and moved. These rules and procedures will include seemingly small, but actually quite important, information on formatting, length and scope of materials, number of copies, mandatory coordination, etc. They will be responsible for ensuring the right, coordinated information is provided to principal officials on time and in expected style so they will need to hear directly the intent of information asks.

Ministry-level executive secretariats should be expected to know their counterparts and establish strong rapport with the minister or their immediate staff. Other offices in the office of the president and at ministries will be expected to direct all formal requests to the executive secretariat so they can be properly tracked, documented and closed-out upon completion. This will be especially important for offices managing relations with the legislature and the media since they will likely have constant inquiries from outside the organization. There should be one central repository for process management, even if individual offices have their own tools to track their own workflows.

Civil Service Roles in Brazil

In Brazil, the work and support of executive secretariat ministerial staff are bound by concrete responsibilities and workflow. As viewed on the government's public website, levels of responsibility, in addition to codified job functions, are available for review.³⁰



The career civil service will be familiar with these rules and know modifications occur each time there is a change in government. It is advisable for at least most executive secretariat staff to be career officials, and for the head of these offices to be trusted enough to be included in daily and longer-term planning meetings at the highest levels of government.



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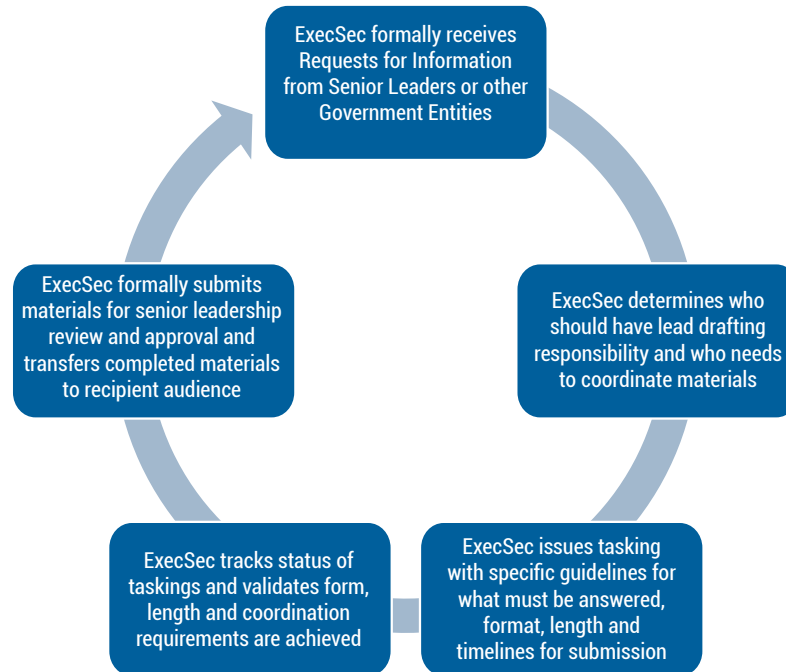
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Suggested Workflow and Internal Coordination of Executive Secretariat



There are strengths and weaknesses in either option. Given the sensitive nature and access of the position, an incoming candidate/president or senior official will want to have complete trust in the judgement and capability of the executive assistant. This trust often is earned because of prior work together. Incoming senior officials may prefer hiring from outside of government because of an already established bond of trust. However, selecting a political appointee to be executive assistant may mean that person is not well-versed in how things operate inside government. This person may have a steep learning curve during the critical transition period. Mid-level career civil servants will have the strong advantage of “knowing the building and the system,” but may be mistrusted by political appointees, especially when being asked to engage political appointees serving similar roles elsewhere in government. Career civil servants also are not likely to have an established reservoir of trust or rapport with the candidate/president or senior officials early in the senior official’s tenure. The candidate will want to weigh those variables carefully in selecting their key aide de camp.

Communications security

Establishing a secure communications infrastructure is essential for **information integrity** in the transition. Having user-friendly information technology is vital for protecting national security and easily sharing information within the transition team, outside supporters and with the outgoing administration. Strong communications platforms enhance adherence to decision-making processes and protocols because stakeholders will know how and where to access the information they need.

Many nations direct existing government entities to provide communications and physical infrastructure to transition teams. Transitions may be directed by law to use the aforementioned facilities and communications platforms. Candidate transition teams established prior to election day may, understandably, be reluctant to input their most sensitive campaign information, such as internal polling data and debate preparation materials, on government managed networks if the government is run by an opposition party president. In this circumstance, it may be advisable for campaigns to invest in their own secure communications platforms and data storage repositories.



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Using government-provided office space carries less risk for opposition party candidates, but transition teams may wish to have an independent security firm conduct a review to ensure the current government does not have listening or other devices embedded in the space. Once transition team operations shift from candidate to president-elect, there will be far less risk that the outgoing administration will collect and compromise the actions of the president-elect.

Of course, the probability of foreign nations targeting the offices and communications networks of president-elect transition staffs increases exponentially during this time. The transition team will want to control access into its working space, and will want to spend time on badging issuance and access processes. The transition team will also want to have dedicated IT staff to manage network access and protective measures from compromise.

TRANSITION READINESS FOR THE INCOMING LEADER

The role of transition teams

Transition teams refer to the groups of people **organized to manage and execute** key tasks during transition phases. Though any eligible candidate can form a transition team (whether they are in the lead in the election race or not), transition teams are more often robustly established by top candidates in an election. Depending on the transition phase, teams may grow in size and change focus and function. In the pre-election phase, transition teams are typically focused on hiring key transition officials, organizing for what must be done, understanding the legal frameworks for complying with relevant national transition laws, and scoping out tasks associated with becoming fully operational. In the post-election phase, the transition team of the unsuccessful candidate is disbanded, while the transition team of the president-elect grows significantly to take on more activities that prepare the leader to assume power following their swearing-into office.

Generally speaking, transition teams are subdivided into smaller groups that oversee key functions for a candidate and/or president-elect. Each of the teams will have distinct roles and responsibilities that funnel key issues to the senior-most transition officials for guidance and adjudication. Transition teams are optimistic endeavors. They are individuals wanting to plan a new way that they believe is a better course. Because so many transition officials will be vying for political appointee jobs, transition coordinators will need to establish clear roles and responsibilities for each of the team's subgroups (for example, sects of the transition team that are responsible for various preparatory functions), so the substance of transitions gets done. Some of these issues and subgroups may include:

- ◆ **Coordinators** - ensure information-sharing occurs, decision-making and that communication processes are in-place across various transition sub-functional groups.
- ◆ **Policy groups** - develop policy options for the candidate/president-elect.
- ◆ **Personnel groups** - identify positions to be filled and identify candidates for consideration to fill those positions.
- ◆ **Landing teams** - engage government ministries and agencies after elections to work directly with career civil servants and outgoing political appointees.
- ◆ **Communications teams** - manage media relations and public messaging for the president-elect and cabinet-head designees.
- ◆ **Logistics teams** - oversee daily operations such as facilities management, IT systems, budgets and payroll.
- ◆ **Human Resources** - hire, train and manage departures of and for transition team personnel.



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- ◆ **Legal teams** - ensure compliance with existing statutes, vetting of candidate slates and proposed executive orders are legally sufficient.
- ◆ **Security advisors** - provide physical security for key officials, conduct counterintelligence awareness and ensure information integrity.

Some nations, like Ghana, specify who from the outgoing administration must serve on the transition team, the right of the incoming president to appoint an equal number of persons, the functions of various transition groups, how soon after election transition meetings should take place and what information is to be shared with the incoming team. Liberia has similar rules prescribed in law.

Forming the new leader's inner circle

Selecting the right transition team and establishing a clear leadership structure around the elected official is essential for supporting the candidate and communicating guidance throughout the transition organization. This effort should include identifying appropriate titles for leadership positions, such as transition head, chief operating officer, heads of communications, policy, personnel, security, legal and others.

The candidate/**president-elect will have their own operating style** for how often they want to meet with the executive leadership team. Some candidates prefer a very small circle of one-on-one meetings with the transition head only, while others will want to hold more inclusive meetings on a regular basis. The most important elements for the executive leadership circle are trust amongst and between themselves, and with the candidate/president-elect.

The public, media, parliamentary members and foreign nations will be looking for signals about how the candidate/president-elect will govern and the people selected for transition team executive leadership roles, and what operating processes they follow, is expressive of the candidate themselves. Given the rapid pace of events and the short-time horizon of a transition, the transition head will want to meet several times a week with the rest of the senior leadership team. These meetings will be to communicate priorities of the day, messages from the candidate/president-elect, and what the leadership team should convey to staff. Each member of the leadership team will have staff supporting them for day-to-day task action. Depending on the size, scale and duration of the transition, each leadership person will presumably have several staff. Staff should be a mix of mid-career substantive experts and junior staff to work operations, like data-based development, ensuring paperwork is completed, arranging meetings, advising their supervisor on feasibility of task completion timelines, etc.



Charles Bolden, U.S. nominee for administrator of NASA, (L), and Lori Garver, nominee for deputy administrator of NASA, testify at their confirmation hearing before the Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee in the Russell Senate Office Building on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C., July 8, 2009.

Photo credit: NG Images/Alamy Stock Photo



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Preparing for political appointments

The appointments process is one of the core areas of work for a transition team in a presidential system that requires the leader to appoint political officials to the administration. To be effective, the appointment process must begin with direction from the candidate/president-elect. The candidate/president-elect should **express the types of personalities they seek in cabinet officials** and the most important qualities (i.e., technical competence, experience, political savvy, loyalty, candor, collegiality, diversity) to include. The president-elect will also advise on which people need to be placed because of agreements made during the campaign, whether due to convincing a rival candidate to step aside or in exchange for the endorsement from a prominent and influential person.

Government ministries of different sizes, complexities and missions will have varying numbers of political appointees. Operational entities, like border control or health care providing government agencies, likely will have fewer political appointees because their core missions or daily activities rarely change direction when a new government assumes office. More politically dependent governing entities, like ministries of trade, justice or foreign affairs are likely to see higher numbers of political appointees. The **overall number of political appointees will vary nation-to-nation**, with larger nations having larger governments, and likely larger numbers of political appointees than smaller nations with smaller governments.

While identifying potential cabinet officials is important to the candidate/president-elect, filling out the rest of political appointments with strong persons is vital for governing successfully. Some nations like the U.S. fill more than 4,000 political positions, with 1,200 of those requiring Senate confirmation.³¹ Normally, the president-elect will select cabinet members and a few other key senior advisor slots, including prominent ambassadors and trusted confidants who will work directly with the president-elect on an ongoing basis. Most often, presidents-elect, heads of transition teams, and cabinet nominees will play varying roles in the selection of sub-cabinet senior appointments. Lower ranking ministry and transition team officials will select, **validate and approve** more junior ranking appointees.

It is important to prioritize filling more senior positions first, even though it is frequently easier to fill lower-level positions because the persons in these jobs will not have the same level of management, leadership or visibility responsibilities. Regardless of seniority, all political appointees should be required to fill a detailed information packet that is reviewed for appropriateness for the position, financial **conflicts of interest and prior history** that could reflect badly on the elected-official. The level of appointee scrutiny should be commensurate with the rank of the position filled. The more senior the position, the more time appointment managers should spend vetting the background information.

Gender Parity in Chile's Cabinet

Gender parity in the cabinet and across the executive government is crucial to advancing gender equality in society as a whole. Some governments have laws outlining national quotas and other requirements to include women at all levels. Many do not. In 2006, when Michelle Bachelet was elected Chile's first woman president, she executed her promise made on the campaign trail to ensure half of her cabinet included women appointees, including her defense, economic and mining ministers.³²

Preparing the leader to address national policies and priorities

Transition teams and incoming administrations often conduct a review of relevant government departments, ministries or agencies to provide the incoming president with the kind of **granular**



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information needed to make informed decisions on matters of immediate importance and for longer-term strategic and budgetary planning for the government.

The president-elect's team may include at least some veterans of prior administrations, but in nearly all cases those persons, along with the many joining an administration that have no prior time in agencies, will need to be provided detailed information about policy issues, personnel, budgets, planning priorities and processes from each national agency.

Many nations require ministries and agencies to prepare transition books for campaigns and/or incoming teams. For example, as noted earlier, Ghanaian law mandates specific types of agency information be provided to incoming transition teams. This information should be warmly received by candidate teams so they can be grounded in realism when asking the candidate to make specific promises to the voting public. And president-elect transition teams will need this information to meld campaign promises into specific policy options.

Even in circumstances where law, policy or tradition leads to the development of credible agency transition materials, transition teams will want to conduct their own reviews to ensure they have all the information they need, and that the information provided is in the preferred form for the candidate.

Transition teams will want to appoint a leader and a group to conduct **agency reviews**. The persons appointed to this job should have prior knowledge of the issues overseen by the agency. Preferably, members of agency review teams will have prior familiarity with executive branch decision-making and the agency under reviewed. Civil servants, especially those who are non-political and/or who have spent their career in government (often referred to as "career civil servants" versus "political") will understandably argue that they are understaffed, overburdened, and that not enough attention is given to the needs and preferences of their agency. Transition teams will need to be able to discern fact from perception. Agency review team members also will need to be able to translate technical terminology into candidate-centric language.

The core product from agency review teams is a clear articulation of the issues awaiting them at agencies and ministries, so the new team is ready to assume control on day one of the new administration. Not only does the review allow the new leader and their teams to approach new policies and programs, but this information can also serve as a tool for ministries directly to engage in strategic planning on policy direction in the first few months and years of the presidency. In many countries, new administrations will need to ready a budget and respond to organizational and staffing requests to the legislative branch soon after assuming office. This is far more likely to be successful and coherent if agency review work has been done before day one.

Presidential Powers in Senegal

In 2016, Senegalese citizens voted to shorten presidential mandates from seven to five years, through a constitutional referendum initiated by President Macky Sall. This change went into effect after the 2019 election, during which President Sall was re-elected for his second and final five-year term. In May of the same year, he promulgated a law abolishing the post of prime minister, which was criticized as a move to extend presidential powers. Concerns are growing over reports that President Sall may seek a third term in 2024, despite the current two-term limit. At the same time, government pressure on the opposition is increasing. In March 2021, the country's main opposition leader, Ousmane Sonko, was arrested after violent clashes between his supporters and police in the capital.³³



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Acquiring resources for transition activities

Creating a physically inviting workplace that includes the necessary resourcing, furnishing, information technology tools, security, and work-place safety standards is a basic building block for efficient transition team operations. Transition teams need presentable work space consistent with national standards for senior government officials. Working-level teams also will need capacity to make phone calls, conduct candidate interviews, input and manage databases, hold group meetings and safely store sensitive materials.

Many democratic nations require the current administration to **supply office space** for candidate teams. Taxpayer-provided assistance to candidate and president-elect transition teams is a best practice since it reduces the role of outside money that can potentially influence new office holders. Reliance on auditable, taxpayer provided funds for stand-up needs also could mean access to existing government contracting vehicles for leasing office space, procuring desks and office supplies and acquiring software suites for information technology. Left to their own devices, candidate teams may downplay the importance of front and back-office operations because it seems less exciting than being close to the candidate, writing policy papers and building candidate slates for potential appointees. However, these operations are crucial to effective operations from day one.

Left to their own, candidate teams may downplay the importance of front and back-office operations because it seems less exciting than being close to the candidate, writing policy papers and building candidate slates for potential appointees. However, these operations are crucial to effective operations from day one.

Even in circumstances when the current government provides the physical basics and access security for workplace operations, candidate and president-elect teams will need to play a direct role in a host of activities, so the need for **appointing a management operations team is essential in all circumstances**. Assigning who sits in what offices — especially for senior and mid-level transition team members vying for proximity to the candidate and the prestige of larger offices with window views — compels a hands-on approach by the candidate team. The candidate team is also responsible for ensuring transition team members wear their badges and properly input meeting minutes and candidate slates in usable database/spreadsheet format. They must also reinforce workplace behavior norms like respect for gender equity and decorum.

Preparing for the shift from campaigning to governing

Before a leader is sworn into office, they and their transition teams must take time to work through the shift in a mode of campaigning to that of governing. This is a complex process that involves working through the intricate nuances of the bureaucracy. It also requires a psychological change of mindset from aspiration to ownership. Candidates may or may not understand the actual constraints and frameworks of governance when they promise major agenda action items on the campaign trail. There is no accountability to achieve promises on the campaign trail. There is when you govern.

It is often true that the **people adroit in campaigning are not as skilled in governing (and vice versa)**. For candidates, presidents-elect and their inner circle, some painful choices will need to be made about de-emphasizing access of some campaign personnel and elevating that of others. Lawyers, for example, likely will play a larger role than communications people in formulating policy once in



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office. Both are needed during the campaign and when governing, but there almost certainly will be far more structures placed on governing. More **record-keeping** rules will exist when governing than when campaigning. Information-sharing and decision-making processes almost certainly will be more complex (and slow) when governing. Oversight rules will be imposed on governing that are not part of campaigning. Successful transition teams recognize that they will want to plan for shifting from campaigning to governing and that the dynamics of each are quite different. Also, some experts note that if a candidate's campaign has focused on a select number of issues and the president-elect is then committed to focusing on those issues when they assume executive office, the process of transitioning from a mode of campaigning to governing is easier given there is a limited number of clear priorities at hand.³⁴

Candidates may or may not understand the actual constraints and frameworks of governance when they promise major agenda action items on the campaign trail. There is no accountability to achieve promises on the campaign trail. There is when you govern.

THE FIRST 100 DAYS IN OFFICE

The period from inauguration to the first 100 days in office is short in terms of the number of days, but represents a critical period for officials in shaping their image and priorities as leader. A well-executed first 100 days in office can set the tone for a successful presidency, just as a foundering, chaotic first 100 days can gravely harm the new president's chance for achieving priority agenda items.

The most important things for ensuring a successful first 100 days in office are:

- ◆ Prior planning and agreement on the ordering of priority objectives
- ◆ Having a clear, substantive agenda that reflects what was promised during the campaign
- ◆ Legal sufficiency
- ◆ Careful vetting by all key stakeholders so unknown variables that are factored into chosen courses of action
- ◆ Buy-in by parliament, external validators
- ◆ Strong communication with the public and media
- ◆ Delegating downward responsibility for actions that can and should be handled at lower levels

The president-elect will need to rely on their senior advisors to vet ideas for feasibility, their legal advisors for sufficiency reviews, and their communications staff to develop language to sell and communicate why action is being taken so early in the period of the president's term. Political advisors will want to ensure initiatives conform to campaign promises and build momentum with key influencers.

Presidents will also want to use their first 100 days in office to calibrate foreign relations and make sure clear signals are sent to friends and adversaries alike. A **president's first trip abroad often carries**



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symbolic weight, particularly related to which nation (or nations) are visited and which are not. New presidents will want to have ready advice from their foreign policy team for what to say during calls of congratulations and what not to say.

The first 100-day period will be a time for the new president and incoming senior officials to engage career civil servants and foster trusting ties with the permanent government. Equally, presidents will want to **set the right tone** with parliament by having focused objectives for calls and meetings with legislators.

The president's first day in office

The first day in office is often as celebratory as it is chaotic. It is a day high in symbolism and reflecting the transfer of power of one president to the next, or an incumbent leader's new term following a democratic election, which is the hallmark of representative democracy.

The incoming president will want to give great care to formulating their first address as president to the people. In many cases, this occurs on the day of the president's swearing-in. This is a deeply personal moment for the candidate turned president-elect turned president of a nation. This is a time for the president to create and articulate a vision for their leadership and priorities. **Everything from their tone, to voice and substance will help define how the people view them as a leader.**

The leader will want to consult with key advisors and speechwriters throughout the iterative drafting process. Key items to take into consideration when drafting the inaugural speech are:

- ◆ What should be said?
- ◆ What should not be said?
- ◆ How should the new president connect with those that voted for the other candidate?
- ◆ Should expectations be raised or tempered?

Of course, the elected official will have their own personal style and wish to pen their own remarks, but most often speech writing is a collaboration.

Moving into the executive residence

In some countries, the first day in office is the day of moving into the official residence and office of the president (some national laws specify the day a new president moves into the official residence). For many countries, it is a day for having a gala lunch and/or dinner, swearing-in cabinet members, taking command of the armed forces, signing select executive orders; and expressing interest and focus on issues of deep, immediate urgency, such as today's global health pandemic.

Some countries do not have specific dates for vacating official residences. This is suboptimal, and is dependent on the goodwill and responsible nature of the outgoing official. Having former government officials still occupying government homes can give the appearance of an incomplete transition and even suggest former government office holders are being inappropriately subsidized for jobs of public trust they no longer hold.

First workday for staff

For staff and office of the presidency advisors, the first day will be a day to move into assigned offices, log in to unfamiliar computer networks, get badge access to official facilities, activate official processes for information-sharing, coordination, and understanding document retention requirements. It is also a good day to introduce themselves to other new faces in the office of the presidency, the permanent government civil service and to political appointees at ministries and departments.



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Personnel, especially in the national security arena, will need to learn and adhere to strict protocols for the safe handling and protection of classified information. It will be important for political appointees to become as familiar as possible with the rules, procedures and policies of operating in the executive branch as soon as possible, preferably during formal orientation briefings led by career government officials done during the post-election, pre-inauguration day phase of the transition.

Executive leadership staff

Operating effectively when taking control of an entire government apparatus requires systems and procedures to make the decision-making machinery work at optimum levels. Day-to-day issue management includes a dedicated body to assign tasks, track progress and document the flow of paper in and out of the organization.

Managing day-to-day operations involves having clear procedures for issuing and tracking assignments. Most effective presidential offices rely on software office suites to catalog requests, send alerts asking for updates, communicating with assignment recipients, clarifying the specifics of the task such as who has lead responsibility, and who must coordinate with whom prior to submission, and for sending completed tasks to the recipient person or entity. They also rely on skilled, motivated and collaborative persons fulfilling specific roles in support of the larger effort.

Ensuring the president has a **strong and trusted inner circle is essential for effective transitions**, especially as the leader enters office and works to effectively assume the mantle of power.

Strong executive leadership staff should:

- ◆ Provide sound judgement
- ◆ Identify risk variables
- ◆ Foster collaboration
- ◆ Be willing to deliver bad news
- ◆ Present the leader with realistic courses of action
- ◆ Act inclusively and in the best interest of the leader
- ◆ Develop ties with key external influences, like the media, members of the outgoing administration and trusted friends and family of the leader

Staffing decisions are subject to the leadership and decisions of each president individually. Some presidents prefer to have a large staff with many separate offices and functions, whereas others may desire just a small, core team. There are **key staffing functions**, however, that will ensure any leader can manage their various responsibilities and demands.

Some of those positions include the following:

Chief of staff: The chief of staff is the essential link between the president and the executive office. The chief of staff should be the one person who can talk bluntly to the president about how things are going and where course corrections are advisable. New presidents will have plenty of people to affirm what they do, but need critical thinking from the chief of staff. The chief of staff is a key advisor for the president. Sometimes the chief of staff is the minister of state or oversees cabinet affairs. The new administration should view the chief of staff as the voice of the candidate and that their guidance reflects the candidate's point of view. Generally, the chief of staff maintains a keen pulse on day-to-day operations but remains strategic and looks to integrate disparate information, ensures fair processes and accurately represents the views of transition team factions.



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Press secretary: The press secretary reports to the communications director, but has a unique and narrowly defined role that makes them often a more visible person, being the primary spokesperson for the president. Press secretaries should establish extensive, trusting ties with journalists and media influencers. Having strong, trusting ties with those in the media can be the difference in receiving advance notice of stories about to break or the opportunity to provide explanatory comment before pieces are published. The press secretary serves as a liaison between the media, the public and the president. This person will look for opportunities for the president to get favorable media exposure, provide official comment from the executive office, evaluate which media inquiries to avoid or respond to, manage media bookings, and develop talking points and/or press releases with subject matter experts.

Communications director: Communications directors usually lead a team of professionals in representing the president to its stakeholders and the public. Communications directors most often supervise the work and engagements of the press secretary, as press relations are subordinate to strategic communications decisions and plans. Communications directors should remain strategic and let press secretaries handle day-to-day engagements with the press. Communications directors are, therefore, freer to think about planning and future needs. This includes creating communications campaigns, monitoring public opinion, and enhancing the leader's brand. Although they typically work during traditional business hours, communications directors may need to work outside of normal hours during situations requiring crisis communication. They may need to travel periodically to attend speaking engagements, meetings and events.

Cabinet secretary: The cabinet secretary is frequently the head of the executive secretariat, and is akin to a chief operating officer for the government bureaucracy. As noted earlier in this guide, the executive secretariat ensures close communication and predictable, well-understood processes and procedures for operating internally and across government. The cabinet secretary is most often a career civil servant with an intimate understanding of how the system operates, sets realistic deadlines and speaks the language of careerists. The cabinet secretary should be expected to establish rules and procedures for how information is to be received, processed and moved. These rules and procedures will include seemingly small, but actually quite important, information on formatting, length and scope of materials, number of copies, mandatory coordination, etc.



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Policy leads (domestic and international): Elected officials presumably have goals and ideas that are important to accomplish. The process of turning these into specific policy proposals is best done in a systematic way that channels ideas, vets them against a range of outcomes and impacts, assesses their economic, diplomatic and political cost and weighs them against time spent on other matters. This process is often led by the president's policy advisors and done in collaboration with relevant ministry and external stakeholders.

The president's senior policy advisor(s) typically work in the office of the president and are responsible for turning broad ideas into specific proposals for advancing the national interest both domestically and internationally. Policy advisor(s) are typically broken down into those who focus on domestic and international issues for that reason.

Often, the policy advisor(s) will convene government stakeholder meetings to be run at senior levels or by more junior personnel for lower ranking ministry officials. They should work with the president's executive secretariat to schedule meetings, task out the drafting and legal coordination of policy papers and circulate minutes of meetings to appropriate personnel. Strong policy lead(s) will vet ideas with subject matter experts and develop a strong understanding of risks and opportunities associated with different courses of action. The policy lead(s) are not expected to be the primary subject matter experts on all topics, but should be expert in the process of developing policy and summarizing policy choices for the leader.

Policy teams often are asked to provide creative, substantive proposals that address national and candidate issues. The relationship between presidential policy advisors and cabinet members can be complex. Presidential policy advisors work directly for the president and are not encumbered with representing the interests of any particular ministry or other government entity. Their exclusive focus is on advancing the interests and agenda of the president.

Cabinet members have to meld advocating for their institutional interest as well as that of the president. Cabinet members also wish to protect their direct relationship with the president and often are loath to work with or through policy advisors since doing so sets up a barrier from direct engagement with organizational lines of authority. Often, cabinet members will dispatch their own staff to engage with presidential policy advisors. However, cabinet members should assess the closeness and seniority of presidential policy advisors and may deem it beneficial to engage directly and ally with persons so close to the president.

Often, serving on policy teams is viewed as exciting and prominent, and many people will want to be on them. It will be up to the policy lead to select the most qualified, diverse in background and ideas and collegial persons to be on the policy team. It will be critical for the policy team to avoid "group think," or only provide rationale for the preconceived views of the candidate. The strongest policy teams will challenge assumptions, look at issues from a host of perspectives, respect the reasonableness of implementation in proposals, and be forward looking.

Political affairs: In addition to a department of advisors focused on key policy initiatives, the executive will have a staffer dedicated to political affairs, and who may advise the leader on initiatives and priorities as aligned with their political party. This ensures the leader maintains awareness of party priorities in order to balance those initiatives with the priorities with those of the government, its laws, national security interests and citizen needs.



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Legal affairs: A strong legal advisor is vital throughout a president's term. The legal advisor and the legal affairs team are responsible for ensuring that the activities of the transition team and administration are in accordance with law and policy, that legislative proposals are legally sufficient and due diligence of financial and record keeping is done correctly and within scope. Legal advisors provide guardrail advice on issues that may be or give the appearance of a conflict of interest. They ensure that civil liberties and civil rights are protected (especially during a candidate's legal vetting post-election), the outgoing administration is meeting its legal obligations to the transition team, and financial and inventory disclosures are complete and appropriate. Legal advisers should be lawyers, while additional professional staff on the legal affairs team should be experts in government regulation, oversight and rulemaking. Attorneys should be expected to anticipate legal issues and offer practical solutions, appropriately resolve legal disputes and vigorously advocate for the transition team's and government's mission.

Financial advisor: The financial advisor will have a critical policy or oversight role about the nation's economy or budgetary outlook and be able to advise the president accordingly. They should work with members of relevant departments and ministries, in addition to the legislature, in order to effectively advise the leader on issues requiring attention. The financial advisor functions presumably will be subsumed by government budget, management and acquisition entities.

State and local (or subnational) liaison: Depending on the system of government, executives will have staff dedicated to liaising with state and local governments, authorities and offices. This is critical to ensuring state resourcing needs are coordinated with national authorities, especially in cases where state or local budgets include a balance between national and state funds for the delivery of goods and services. It also allows the executive to maintain awareness on issues and needs across the country.

Public liaison: Public liaisons are critical to ensuring the executive maintains connection with the citizenry, including special interest groups. A government may maintain a public or civic education wing of the executive office, which offers public tours and other educational and cultural engagement opportunities. In addition, it is critical that a department be dedicated to liaising with organized groups in order to maintain awareness of public needs, priorities and opportunities for engagement.

Scheduler: Schedulers play an essential role in determining who meets with the president, how long meetings will last, and who will be in attendance. Scheduling is a highly organized task that involves confirming meeting times, making cascading adjustments and understanding the president's meeting preferences (location, how many people should in meetings, when to interrupt meetings so they end on time or because of a significant event and how early/late in the day meetings can commence or conclude). Schedulers typically sit just outside the president's office and will engage frequently throughout the day with the candidate/president on changes to the daily calendar. Schedulers are also "gatekeepers" who tell people they may or may not enter the president's office. Scheduling is a stressful activity, especially since presidents are always in high demand. Schedulers often observe the most sensitive activities of the president; therefore, they should be persons of the highest integrity and have the full trust of the leader. Serving as scheduler for the president is not a junior-level position. The senior executive scheduler, for example, will often place calls to and from world and national leaders. Scheduler decorum in dealing with others is a reflection of the president. In some systems, this role is played by a protocol officer, or conducted in tandem with protocol and other security officials.



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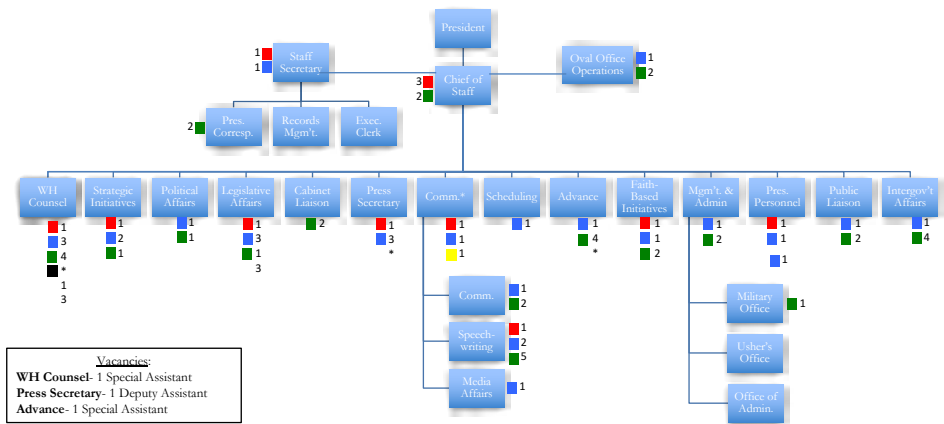
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Commissioned Officers and Similarly Titled Staff White House Office George W. Bush 2008

Key
■ Assistant to the President
■ Deputy Assistant to the President
■ Special Assistant to the President
■ Special Advisor to the President
■ Counsel to the President
■ Associate Counsel to the President
■ Deputy Counsel to the President
■ Counselor to the President
* Vacant Position



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Source: Federal Yellow Book '08

Source: *Office Briefs – White House Transition Project (2016)*

The Office of the First Lady

In some countries, specific staff or offices are designated to support the spouse of the president. For example, the U.S., Liberia, Tanzania, Uganda, Ethiopia, and more, have “first lady” operations, in which the spouse of the president takes on unique projects dedicated to advancing critical initiatives in civil society and the public at large.³⁵ For more information on the work of women globally through spousal executive office engagements, the George W. Bush Institute’s First Ladies Initiative and corresponding Women’s Initiative offers critical thought leadership through the influence and leadership of first spouses across the world.³⁶

EXECUTIVE COMMUNICATIONS

Strong external messaging is critical to **advancing the policy and political agenda** of the president. Effective external communications are as much a process of message development and recognizing when and how to message, as it is the substance of the message itself. It begins with identifying roles and missions for the communications team, hiring a strong team with experience developing messages and having strong relations with media influencers. The communications team should be able to channel the voice of the president and identify opportunities for the president’s preferred means for external communications.

Communications key players

As noted earlier, the external communications team is typically led by a **director of communications**. This person will lead a team of professionals in representing the candidate/president to its stakeholders and the public. Often, the communications director will have a close relationship with the executive and will also have extensive background in political campaign and governing communications. The communications director is a senior position in any campaign and transition. The communications



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director likely will play a key role in the drafting and editing of candidate speeches and the rollout of major initiatives.

The **press secretary** resides one level below the director of communications and normally serves as a liaison between the media, the public and the office-holder. This person will look for opportunities for the candidate to get favorable media exposure, provide official comment from the candidate or the transition office, evaluate which media inquiries to avoid or respond to, manage media bookings, and develop talking points and/or press releases with subject matter experts for candidate use or posting on social media.

Based on the size and scale of the operation, the campaign and transition effort may have a “**press shop**” reporting to the press secretary. The press shop will be responsible for monitoring news and social media for coverage of the candidate and drafting press releases. Typically, the press shop is for more junior members of the external communications team.

The **press corps** is the validated group of journalists who have credentials to access campaigns and official events open to the media. Press credentialing is the process of determining standards for news outlets to be classified as legitimate journalistic entities. Each nation will have its own particular definition, but normally an entity is considered a media outlet if it has generally accepted standards for publishing, editing, sourcing and professional staff. Credentialing in democracies is neutral to the perceived political leaning of outlets. Rather, it is done to ensure the safety and integrity of actual media entities (and those doing freelance journalism for those entities), versus giving access to individuals asserting they are journalists but actually incendiary provocateurs operating strictly to undermine democracy and/or are agents of foreign adversaries.

*Effective external communications
are as much a process of message
development and recognizing
when and how to message as it is
the substance of the message itself.*

Communications strategic planning

Communications strategic planning is critical for creating and coordinating message frameworks. Individual candidates have some coordination requirements, such as with political allies and external advisors, but when transitioning to president-elect and a new administration, communications planning and coordinating becomes especially important to successful governing.

Communications strategic planning is both a substantive and coordinating process. The substance of communications strategic planning is ensuring a strong communications team is in place and **key message themes** are identified. The communications team should engage with the candidate early to understand what is important to them, how they prefer to express themselves and what tone should be taken for communications (i.e., positive, direct, nuanced, aggressive, etc.). They can use this information to begin building the communications strategic plan.

The communications strategic plan should include preferred modes of communication (i.e., television interviews, press releases, opinion articles, stand-alone speeches, social media, etc.), the potential frequency of engagements, **overarching themes that are consistent with the president’s values and tone**, and preferred media and journalists who are likely to be even-handed or even sympathetic to the president’s views. Analyzing and assessing the targets of messages is equally important in strategic communications planning. Having a plan for reaching the whole nation to gain passage of critical legislation may require different tools and tenor. Message developers will want to assess receptivity to messages across all communities, with a particular focus on women and other marginalized groups.



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Aligning communications messaging across government is challenging and important.

Contradictory messages make campaigns, transitions and new administrations appear unready to lead. Constant, consistent and effective messaging can build political capital, garner more support among the electorate and reduce the possibility of adversaries misreading the new leader's intent. Equally important is ensuring **coordination** of messaging. This must occur at multiple levels — both vertically within an organization and horizontally across government stakeholder entities — to ensure that messages going out from the government are consistent with what the leader themselves has articulated before or intends to based on their visions, priorities and policies. In certain circumstances, coordination (or at least advance notice) can be provided to legislators or external influencers so they will be in a position to reaffirm the message.

Media relations and technicalities

Government openness mechanisms — such as government websites, press conferences, leadership townhalls, public events and information-sharing technologies — provide citizens with accessible means for gathering and sharing information with their elected officials. Commitments to providing **government openness and transparent information-sharing strengthens public trust and confidence in institutions** and advances promises for accountability and transparency of government resources, and ultimately, service delivery. Two-way feedback allows both the government to provide information externally to the public, and for the public to have opportunities to share their feedback and priorities in return. Whether this is done through live or public forums, such as a press conference, or through online information-sharing channels that report information on policy plans and implementation, such mechanisms enhance a leader's visibility to the public, especially as they work to codify their priorities and vision in their first few months in office. To develop commitments to government openness and transparency, leaders can work with global networks, such as the Open Government Partnership (OGP),³⁷ which supports governments in developing national commitments to openness across all levels.

Working with the press is both an art and science. It is art in understanding when knowing to be vague or when being specific is more advantageous, when to go “off-the-record” to give amplifying background or to confirm information about an issue with a trusted member of the press. Working the press is science in the need to build strong internal control mechanisms for who can talk to the media, message discipline and what they are allowed to say and how to document what was said.

Members of the new administration should receive **media engagement training** on how to handle contentious inquiries, pivot to other topics, reframe questions to more favorable terrain, etc. Similarly, those preparing for public engagements should be made familiar with how to stand and what to do with their hands while giving a speech, maintaining a tight cadence in delivery, dressing appropriately for the circumstance, and understanding what proper etiquette is for various public engagement forums. Senior members of the team may wish to receive critical feedback from a public affairs expert during videotaped media training and mock questions and answers sessions.

New administrations will want to develop templates for crafting quotes, press releases and talking points for the media. There are numerous options for candidates to select from, but good practices include adherence to the “**three Cs**” of **clarity, conciseness and consistency**. Message points should be clear and easily understood. They should be as brief as appropriate and consistent in tone when circumstances are the same.

Press releases should be issued to inform the public and media of a new policy pronouncement, proposed executive order or changes in executive branch personnel. Quotes often are embedded in press releases to humanize the announcement and to signal special emphasis on certain elements of the release. Media often will take the quote in releases directly, rather than interpreting for themselves the meaning of the substance.



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The “three C’s” of clarity, conciseness and consistency are critical to effective presidential messaging. These elements help engage public awareness and understanding of a leader’s vision and efforts.

Preparing the leader for public appearances and speaking engagements

Talking points are crafted to guide what the public speaker should highlight in meetings or press events. Too often, talking points are overly wordy for easy access by the user. Most officials prefer talking points that function as reminders of key messages.

Organizing **public meetings** is a multi-step process. Preparation includes understanding the objective of the meeting, determining venue, geographic location, optimal size of audience, how long the event should last, who and how to invite and alert attendees, and whether the event should be open or closed to press.

Event planners will need to make decisions on a range of issues. Should they employ visuals, such as signs, posters, banners, videos, hand-outs, campaign literature and other leave-behind items like car bumper stickers. Other decision points include if food or beverages will be served, whether there should be campaign or political appointee staff present in the audience to counter protesters, if access needs to be controlled, security, movement to and from the venue, etc.

Preparing speakers for public events includes providing remarks to the speakers well in advance of the actual event. Some speakers will want to rehearse remarks beforehand. Some speakers will request a complete speech and want to speak from a teleprompter. Others may request an outline or talking points as reference material and speak more extemporaneously.

Speakers should be provided background material on the event objective, who is expected to attend, including VIPs and media, how receptive the audience likely will be to the presentation, if the speaker will be taking questions at the end of the remarks and for how long, who will meet the speaker, whether the speaker will present from a podium, table or stand informally if others will be introducing the speaker, if they are the only speaker and how departure from the event will be organized.

Substantively, the speaker should be briefed on expected questions from the audience, as well as optimal answers and topics to emphasize and avoid. Candidates, presidents-elect and new administration teams often will issue press releases following public meetings to underscore key points and help shape media coverage.

Press conferences are unique events for candidates, presidents-elect and new administrations. Press conferences are an important activity in democracies. They promote transparency, accountability, acknowledgement of free press, norms and rule of law.

New administrations are expected to hold press conferences with some frequency, driven by events and national tradition. Many democratic countries expect their government officials and those campaigning for office to hold press conferences on a regular basis. Some nations have norms of spokespersons holding daily press conferences, including at multiple ministries and at the office of the presidency.

Preparing presidents for press conferences is often done by providing written talking points that are readily accessible, and organized by topic in a briefing book with issues of concern, highlighted



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as “watch out for” tabs. Relative newcomers to press conferences may wish to hold “murder boards” before press conferences, whereby speakers are peppered with questions by staff posing as mock journalists so they can practice answering. Staff should be aware of anticipated lines of inquiry and proposed responses to share with the speaker during the preparatory phase of press conferences.

Press conferences are generally organized by alerting credentialed journalists and media of when, where and why there will be a press conference. Access to press conferences may be controlled or open to all interested in attending. Typically, **press conferences regulate access** so they do not appear to be rallies or chaotic.

Effective press conferences often employ visuals to drive home key points and focus journalists on matters of importance to the speaker. It is also advisable for there to be press staff available and ready to announce termination of the event at the appropriate time.

Inclusivity and Representation

Inclusive and accessible communications are critical to strong strategic communications. Ensuring presidential communications reach citizens where they are, and are informed by the needs of diverse cultures and groups, in addition to women and other marginalized communities, will strengthen trust between a new leader and the people and provide enhanced access and engagement of a broader range of the citizenry. Leaders should work to ensure all press conferences are available in sign language to ensure individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing have opportunities to engage. Similarly, providing inclusive language access to televised or radio programs will allow citizens of multiple language capacities to tune in. Finally, for open press and public events, leaders and their teams should work to ensure accessibility compliance with local disability rights or the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities so that individuals with disabilities have equal access to engage. For example, in the first few days of U.S. President Joseph Biden’s presidency, his press secretary announced that all White House press briefings would include an American Sign Language interpreter as part of the new administration’s accessibility and inclusion efforts.³⁸ Also in the U.S., the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention developed a general media relations guide for engaging effectively with diverse groups and ethnic media outlets to deliver information accessibly and inclusively to all as it relates to public health guidelines. Such information is critical when reaching communities during a public health crisis, such as COVID-19.³⁹



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The conduct of outgoing administrations often is bound by custom, norms, policy and law. Comporting affirmatively with these traditions will help in the successful transition of power from one president to the next. Some elections are bitter affairs, and it is incumbent on the outgoing president to instruct their government and political influencers to act in the best interest of the nation. History judges how presidents depart office. **Good conduct may even position the outgoing president's political party to emerge stronger.** Even in transitions where one party is maintaining the presidency, outgoing presidents have the responsibility and the political requirement to show the nation that their party is a strong steward of the national interest.

Regardless of whether a transition is from one party to another, and even if an election returns a president for another term in office, current administrations are responsible to ready the national government for a transfer of power, and to do so well in advance of election day. The following section will outline transition mechanics assuming either an incumbent or outgoing leader, but for distinguishing purposes, will refer to the "outgoing administration" in reference.

A successful transition for an outgoing administration occurs when it meets all of its legal, policy and normative requirements, as well as **sets up the new administration for readiness to govern on day one.** Readiness to govern means that the outgoing administration ensures that the incoming administration is aware of all informal and secret obligations made to foreign nations.

The outgoing administration should avoid last minute rulemaking or hiring political appointees into career government jobs. They should fully disclose the nation's finances and provide an accounting of government assets. The outgoing administration should give specific briefings on active and persistent threats to continuity in government procedures, **conduct an orientation on government decision-making processes and crisis management,** and ready the electorate psychologically and politically for a change in management by remaining appropriately distant to the maximum extent practicable from the new government's approach to its first 100 days in office.

A successful transition for an outgoing administration occurs when it meets all of its legal, policy and normative requirements, as well as sets up the new administration for readiness to govern on day one.

Outgoing administration transition teams

As noted in previous sections, departing administrations often have to formally establish a transition team to comply with national law. Outgoing presidents may have to follow specific guidelines for the organizational structure of the transition team, timelines for establishment, information-sharing with qualified candidates and presidents-elect and their transition teams, **asset accounting and records retention.** Whether formally prescribed or not, outgoing administrations should establish a formal transition team, staffed primarily by career civil servants and insulated from day-to-day government operations and other responsibilities.

The outgoing administration's transition team's responsibilities vary based on the stage of the election cycle. Good practices include an increasingly specific transition process with general information provided to qualified candidate teams before the election, and specific policy, budget and



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programmatic briefing books for the president-elect's transition team after the election outcome has been certified. **Deliverable timelines** for both presumably will be knowable based on the national election calendar. Outgoing administrations should plan accordingly for how long it will take to task-out, review and finalize materials for these known timelines.

It will be important for the transition team to have its own dedicated workspace separate from the day-to-day and political activities of the current government. The transition team needs the authority to request that the executive secretariat task-out transition materials. This tasking authority will need to be exercised judiciously and precisely so career civil servants preparing materials will know what specific items should be addressed, format rules, due dates and coordination requirements. The transition team also may be asked to manage the **close-out, document retention and government asset inventory** listing tasks for the outgoing team, per national law and custom. The transition team should work closely with legal advisors to ensure compliance and legal sufficiency of responses.

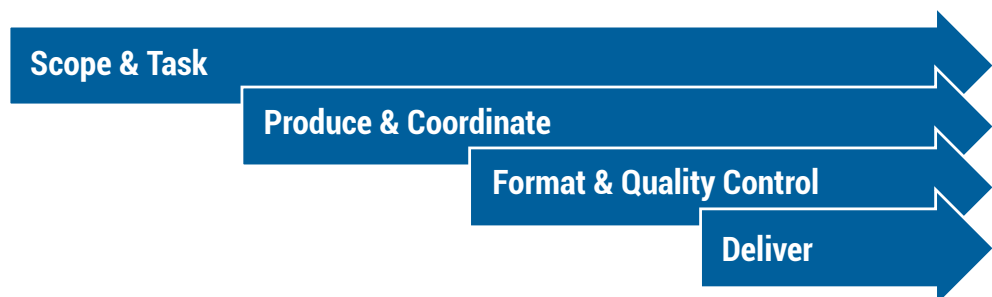
Planning before an end of term in office

Planning for a successful transition from the perspective of the outgoing administration is a process with clear benchmarks and timelines for deliverables. It is recommended that planning begins with an understanding of the tasks, deliverables and timelines. These variables will vary from country to country, but the need to have effective output tied to each subtask is a universal requirement. As with other matters of government, it is sound practice to plan and assign tasks months in advance of the transition.

The outgoing administration may wish to leverage the [executive secretariat process](#), utilizing a central body in each ministry and within the office of the president for issuing, tracking and coordinating transition briefing materials for the incoming administration. Using this existing mechanism, as visually displayed earlier in this guide, will reduce the likelihood of confusion and provide assurance that the tasking is being done authoritatively.

Well before deliverables are due, it is advisable for the outgoing transition team to issue government-wide guidance on expectations during the transition period. Even though career civil servants may have experienced earlier transitions, **a message from the sitting president to the government about the need for a successful transfer of power will send an important signal that the coming months will be a period of managed change**, and that all are stakeholders in making it a successful change.

Planning for Delivery of Transition Material





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The passage of strategic information related to policy and security

Often, there are **formal and informal channels for sharing strategic information** within campaigns and between the incoming and outgoing administrations. Both channels are useful to have. Formal channels document what is being shared, who is sharing it, when it is shared and how it is shared. They have the added benefit of being documentable for oversight and maintaining complete historical records.

Informal channels often allow for more candid information-sharing and greater dialogue. They can be ad hoc, arranged quietly and kept in small circles. Informal channels may be helpful in providing advance notice that a matter will soon be made public, allowing time to prepare a thoughtful response. Establishment of informal channels can be difficult in the heat of campaigns, especially when engaging **across party lines**, but the ability to do so means **trust is being established** and that at least some figures are putting a successful transition ahead of party and personal politics.

The outgoing administration is expected to determine the format, length and level of specificity of information shared with qualified candidates, leaving it to candidate teams to reformat and pursue clarifications for candidates if needed. The president-elect can expect to have more opportunity to provide guidance to the outgoing transition team about preferred format, length and specificity of incoming materials once the election results are known. All parties in the transition effort will benefit from having a consistent format and transmission vehicle for making and responding to requests for information.

National laws may govern the types, frequency and scope of information provided to qualified candidates and presidents-elect. This sharing is formal, auditable, and may appear rudimentary to experienced, qualified candidates. Understandably, current administrations will be cautious about sharing inside information with qualified candidates if that information must be shared — as it is strongly preferred — with all qualified candidates regardless of party affiliation. The information should get far more specific when a qualified candidate becomes the president-elect.

Some nations have special provisions for sharing sensitive national security information by outgoing officials with qualified candidates and presidents-elect, including the U.S. and South Korea. These special provisions are useful for providing a legal framework for sharing necessary national security information and to ensure access control of sensitive and classified information. Generally, only a small circle of personnel connected to the qualified candidate, or possibly only the candidate, receive sensitive national security information.

The outgoing administration is expected to determine the format, length and level of specificity of information shared with qualified candidates, leaving it to candidate teams to reformat and pursue clarifications for candidates if needed.

Persons able to receive sensitive and classified national security information need to be designated for access, consistent with national laws governing the number and rank of candidate teams eligible. Designated persons likely will need to be issued a temporary security clearance, most often only after they have been validated by the current administration as meeting suitability requirements. This validation generally involves a background investigation.

First time recipients of **classified national security information** often are disappointed by the broad nature of what is conveyed. National security institutions of government are unlikely to share specific



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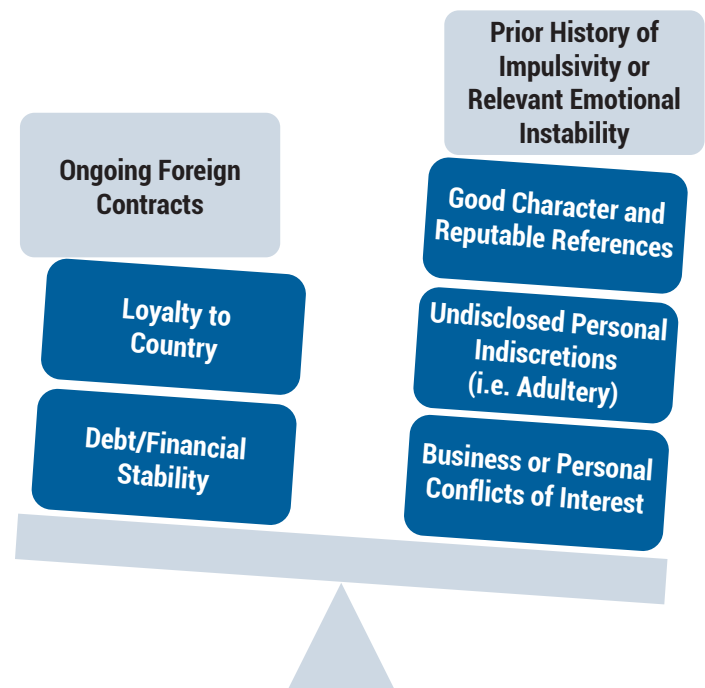
information about intelligence activities, sources of information, and specific operational analysis with qualified candidate teams because they are institutionally guarded and operate within a “need-to-know” culture. Qualified candidate teams have little “need-to-know” about sensitive operational details. Presidents-elect have a far greater need to know and should be briefed on all relevant information.

The common and logical reason for sharing generalized national security information with those at the qualified candidate stage is so they are aware of broad threats to the nation, and can protect themselves and national interests from unconsidered statements about foreign affairs and national security threats. Of course, while candidates may advocate for any foreign relation they wish to on the campaign, having some knowledge of the threat and analysis information is being provided to the current government could avoid inadvertently risking national security.

Presidents-elect need to be **prepared to protect, defend and advance a country’s national security interests** on day one.

The rationale for providing them with full awareness of all national security information and activities as soon as they are certified as election winners is compelling and straightforward. More challenging is how many senior transition team officials need access to the full scope of sclassified national security information. Presidents-elect do not have operational control of national decision-making, so many outgoing administrations will want to share their most sensitive, operational national security information with just a small group of the president-elect’s senior advisors.

Key Variables Investigators Use for Security Clearance Suitability



Candidates for security clearances should expect to complete detailed disclosure forms. Investigators will attempt to validate the information for accuracy and completeness. Generally, investigators are trying to determine if someone is subject to blackmail because of vulnerabilities in their past or risky behaviors that could compel a person to compromise their nation. The graph below highlights some of the issues investigators focus on when completing their evaluations.

National agency history and priorities

Outgoing administrations play a vital role in ensuring that incoming teams are provided with a comprehensive picture of what happens at specific national agencies, ranging from personnel to budgets to policy. It is not the job of outgoing governments to advocate for its policy positions, but outgoing administrations should give the new team the vital, essential information it needs to fairly evaluate whether current policies, programs and organizational structure align with the vision, mission and priorities of the new president.



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Incoming teams will be understandably cautious of the information provided by outgoing political appointees, so it is appropriate for career civil servants to be the primary interlocutors for information-sharing and briefings to the incoming transition team. In some countries, incoming transition teams will designate “landing teams” to work on a daily basis at agencies. They work directly with career officials on presentations of the status quo for transition team policy-setters. **Landing teams** are a small number of people asked by the transition team to establish a presence at ministries as soon as the president-elect is certified to be the next president. Landing teams likely will be asked to do initial surveys of agency activities, establish working relations with key outgoing political and career civil servants and begin the process of collecting priority information for the incoming transition team.

Advanced planning by the outgoing administration is necessary for readying high-quality and timely national agency-specific transition reports for the incoming transition team. It is preferable for **experienced career civil servants to be the primary actors in developing and briefing information for the incoming team**, recognizing that the political leadership of the outgoing administration is in charge of the government until the transfer of power occurs.

Advanced planning by the outgoing administration is necessary for readying high-quality and timely national agency specific transition reports for the incoming transition team.

Outgoing agency transition heads should ensure the tasking of materials addresses all matters necessary for the new team to be ready on day one. The incoming team should not be surprised by major or hidden information at agencies when it assumes office. All matters should be disclosed in advance. Taskings should be issued months before due dates. Specific processes for archiving and recordkeeping will be outlined in more detail in a following section.

Taskings should be comprehensive and specific. Budget and finance offices should be asked to provide detailed spending, liabilities, acquisitions and financial forecasting information. Management and personnel offices should present information on organizational design, decision-making processes, hiring rules, strategic planning, and key performance indicators used for oversight analysis. Policy offices should disclose key current deliberations, earlier promises made to stakeholders (domestic and international) and what items are likely to emerge on the policy agenda. National security institutions should disclose appropriate status updates, contextual analysis and sensitive programmatic reports to appropriately cleared persons with a need-to-know requirement. All agencies should present detailed information about organizational structure, authorities, budgets, equity stakeholders, etc.

Taskings should prioritize information by level of importance. Incoming administrations will be inundated with **briefing books and information flows** from interested parties, so it is most helpful for agency transition teams to identify what it views as most important for the new team to review. The incoming team can opt to focus on other matters, but beginning with well-organized materials that highlight key issues increases the likelihood the new team will be ready to prioritize what it must do on day one for the new president.

Solidifying the outgoing leader’s policy legacy

Policy legacies can be promoted and institutionalized by practice. They are the product of decisions made (or not made) by an administration when faced with options for how to address situations — whether as a result of a traumatic event or planned actions — leading to changes in law and/or direction of the nation. Policy legacies are shaped by the actions the president takes throughout their time in office, which the public is acutely aware of in their last months in office. It is incumbent on the



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outgoing leader to make sure their parting actions and communications are shaping how they will be viewed in their legacy.

Generally speaking, policy legacies are reserved for the most consequential and enduring actions by a president. Policy legacies can be cemented by how well a president promoted national reconciliation, drove racial and gender equality, addressed environmental change, responded to a natural or man-made disaster, improved public education, entered or left foreign affairs arrangements, spurred economic growth, enhanced civil liberties or provided equitable public safety.

Still, presidents and their strategists can increase the probability they will have a positive legacy by remaining focused on key priorities through the very end of their tenure. Presidents are president until the last day of their tenure, and they have the right and obligation to exercise governing authority from their first to their last day in office. Part of this responsibility is **promoting the national interest toward a preferred direction**. Part of that promotion is informing and persuading the public that decisions taken are correct and should be followed well beyond the end of the president's tenure.

Presidents can further foster a positive, lasting policy legacy by their actions during transition and what they do after they leave office. Leaving office in a **dignified** manner — calling all the nation to respect the outcome of a legitimate democratic election — reflects putting the national interest above self-interest.

Handover notes

Handover notes generally refer to informal messages and communications one administration shares with the next. These notes are vital exchanges for informing the new team of items the outgoing administration is concerned about, but does not want to include in formal transition briefing papers. These may include assumptions they believe others will make about the new team; private or informal arrangements they made with foreign governments; or general words of advice about people, processes and institutions.

Ghana enacted specific legal requirements for providing handover notes to incoming transition teams. Ghanaian law calls on the outgoing office of the president to “prepare a set of comprehensive handing over notes covering the term of office of the president.”⁴⁰ Ghanaian law says handover notes shall include notes on the activities of the office of the president and office of the vice president, and of agencies under the portfolios of each, reflecting the accurate developments which have taken place during the tenure of office. Mexico also has a long-standing and effective tradition of the presidents preparing handover notes and documents to incoming transition teams, so the new president is best prepared to lead on day one. In its successful transfer of power in 2012, outgoing Mexican President Calderon ordered his cabinet secretaries to “prepare reports documenting ongoing projects, policies and office organizational structures.”⁴¹

Some nations may deem handover notes as official documents subject to document retention and disclosure requirements. Even in this circumstance, there is value in sharing informal information with the incoming administration so the new team is maximally informed of what it will be inheriting. When deemed official documents, outgoing administrations should catalog what is being shared, with whom and by whom. The **transition team should be provided copies of all official documents shared** with the new team, even if they are provided as handover notes outside of the official transition tasking process and framework. This will assist in meeting document retention requirements.



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Nigeria's Presidential Transition of 2015

In 2015, Nigerians elected Muhammadu Buhari, an opposition politician, for the first time in its history since independence. Despite the initial apprehension about whether or not the two main candidates would accept the outcome of the election, outgoing President Goodluck Jonathan eventually conceded and spent the time during the transition to welcome President Buhari to the presidential villa and present him with several handover notes.⁴² Also, in an interview in 2015, the chairman of the Buhari transition committee spoke about challenges in transitioning office, including receiving 18,000 pages of transition notes just three days prior to the inauguration. They also faced challenges with staffing, office accommodations and other processes surrounding the president's readiness to assume office.⁴³ Still, President Jonathan's concession and acts of cooperation in the transition contributed to an internationally-renowned legacy and praise, despite allegations of corruption against the leader in his months before leaving office. Coined by some analysts as a moment of "reinvention,"⁴⁴ the steps taken by an outgoing leader in their last weeks and days in office can have a significant impact on their legacy overall.

Working with the civil service in preparing to depart office

As noted earlier in this guide, career government officials, also known as members of the civil service, likely will see numerous presidential transitions throughout their career. They will recall earlier times when they were asked to prepare transition books for an outgoing administration and brief members of the incoming administration. Likely, they will be able to assess how basic or expert the incoming person's understanding is of government rules, processes, procedures and substantive policy, and adjust their briefings accordingly. In most nations, career government officials are trained to be apolitical and to support incoming administrations with equal commitment as outgoing administrations.

Political appointees should avoid disparaging the outgoing administration. They should avoid posting negative or ill-tempered matters on social media or statements in the media about the incoming administration. They should not publicly disparage their government peers, subordinates or supervisors. Doing so risks undermining confidence in democratic institutions and the people serving the nation.

Politics is the business of political appointees, and they should not put career civil servants in positions that would compromise their apolitical mandates. Similarly, outgoing political appointees may wish to salute the career government officials they are leaving behind. Small gestures such as personal thank you notes and recognition that their work is important and go a long way with career officials. In many countries, political appointees may return if their political party regains the presidency, so making a respectful departure will make for a more welcoming return.

Executive privileges in the last months in office

Relations between the executive and legislative branches are critical to ensuring transparency, oversight and accountability in a transition. National law will dictate permissible last-minute rulemaking by outgoing administrations. Even when allowed, national law may limit the scope, timing and types of rules allowed in the waning days of a presidency. There are many appropriate circumstances in which last-minute rulemaking is in the national interest, but there are more circumstances in which adopting last-minute rulemaking does not advance the national interest. Transitions should **reinforce democratic norms and respect for the will of the people**. Rulemaking that benefits the outgoing president or their party by restricting the actions of the incoming administration, or goes against voter sentiment, undermines faith in democratic government. Self-dealing last-minute rulemaking and decisions that contradict voter sentiment should be avoided.



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When last-minute rulemaking needs to be done, the outgoing administration should have a strong public rationale. The public trust will not be undermined if the outgoing administration is able to make the credible case that action must be taken before the new government takes office.

Circumstances like sudden changes in public safety, economic catastrophe or discovery of urgent medicines that require waivers for public use are more likely to be accepted as good government, strong leadership and consistent with democratic values than the pardoning of friends or issuing export licenses to business acquaintances. If possible, the outgoing administration may wish to consult with the president-elect. The president and president-elect may even agree it beneficial to have the president-elect endorse the action, recognizing there is one president at a time.

Outgoing presidents should avoid placing their political appointees in permanent career civil service positions.

Some nations have legal protections forbidding such actions, but many do not. The norm should be respect for the professionalism of the civil service by not using permanent jobs as an outgoing gift to favored staff. Some political appointees may wish to apply for open civil service positions, and allowing them to compete for jobs on an equal basis with other qualified candidates will add to the quality of the applicant pool. But skewing hiring and injecting political-oriented persons into the apolitical permanent bureaucracy can undermine public trust and democratic norms.

Rulemaking that benefits the outgoing president or their party by restricting the actions of the incoming administration, or goes against voter sentiment, undermines faith in democratic government.

In all circumstances, transitions will be more successful in reinforcing democratic norms when outgoing presidents do what they can to help successors succeed by respecting the will of the electorate and acting with temperance when contemplating last-minute rulemaking and other decisions. National legislatures can play a key role in preventing last-minute rulemaking. The United States Congress, for example, requires the executive branch to prevent political appointees from “burrowing in” to career officials, preserve official records, decline to confirm last minute judicial nominations and mandate reports on regulations promulgated during the final 120 days of an administration. This final provision mandating reporting requirements on new regulations facilitates is another provision of U.S. transition law that allows the incoming administration to withdraw regulations proposed by the outgoing administration made during its last 120 days in office.⁴⁵

Legislative legacy

Outgoing presidents have limited ability to pass along legislative priorities to an incoming administration, even if the successor president is of the same political party. Departing leaders can continue to make their case to the public and legislators when they are out of office, but do so without the formal trappings of power.

Former presidents can help cement their legislative priorities if the new president shares the former’s legislative objectives. When there is alignment between the former and current presidents, former presidents, especially popular former presidents, can validate and endorse what the current president is trying to achieve. Conversely, former presidents can help thwart efforts to undo legislation enacted during their tenure by marshaling allies to block change. There are times, for example, when incoming presidents have a more pro-business perspective and will want to undo landmark environmental protections enacted by the former president. A former president can speak out in media appearances, opinion pieces and engage influencers to voice opposition to proposed legislative rollbacks to preserve their legacy.



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Outgoing presidents can help ensure their legislative accomplishments by making a compelling case to the public for sustaining the direction they have set, recognizing the nation has voted for a new leader who may set a new direction.

Argentinian President Cristina Kirchner's Outgoing Legacy

After an eight-year term in office, Argentinian President Cristina Kirchner made the decision to skip the inauguration of her successor President Mauricio Macri, given a public disagreement over when the official transition was scheduled to take place. The conflict led to last-minute security issues, legal ramifications and confusion among dignitaries attending the event. It was also the first time in the nation's democratic history that a president missed their successor's inauguration, shaping the legacy of President Kirchner in her final days as leader.⁴⁶

Archival of information

National law may dictate what must be archived for document retention. Outgoing administrations should work closely with presidential and ministry-level legal advisors, information technologists, security specialists and public affairs officers on understanding and complying with specific requirements for archiving official material.

As a general rule, all memorandum, strategies, decision documents, meeting notes and minutes, social media postings, emails, texts, procurement documents, legal opinions, diplomatic and public correspondence, audit and inspection reports, etc., are official documents and should be preserved and archived. Special accommodation will need to be made for the **long-term retention and storage of classified and national security related information**. It is useful for governments to establish independent entities for indexing, stewarding and ensuring access to historical records. The Republic of Korea, for example, has an official foundation for presidential archives which is responsible for collecting, managing and servicing presidential records for the “history, and to ensure transparency and accountability on {the} nation’s public services that contribute to the development of democracy in the Republic of Korea.”⁴⁷

Archived materials should be indexed for easy search, digitized and uploaded into secure cloud storage database containers where they can be accessed by the public, or in more limited fashion if the materials are deemed classified or not for distribution. Nations also should **retain hardcopy originals** of documents for long-term physical warehousing to the maximum extent practicable. Physical documents have historical value and should be kept in climate-controlled storage locations with controlled access and designated staff to assist in document requests.

As a general rule, all memorandum, strategies, decision documents, memorandums for the record, meeting notes, social media postings, emails, texts, procurement documents, legal opinions, diplomatic and public correspondence, audit and inspection reports, etc., are official documents and should be preserved and archived.



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Outgoing administrations should provide direction to ministries and other government entities with guidance on what materials must be preserved and archived well before the end of term. Ministries and other government entities should **publish and widely circulate to all political appointees instructions on what and how to preserve official information**. These instructions should be issued before political appointees begin to depart from their government positions. It is recommended that human resources departments develop a checklist for departing officials that includes confirmation of compliance with document retention rules.

Converting websites, media and information

Outgoing administrations should ensure that ministry and other government websites are updated when key personnel depart, senior positions are vacant or if someone is appointed to serve in an acting capacity.

Similarly, departing administrations may want to craft their own official narrative about what transpired during their time in office. These narratives, or **summaries of accomplishments**, can exist in classified and unclassified forms on ministry websites or social media. These narratives are distinct from the more clinical transition briefing materials provided to the incoming administration.

Official websites and public statements are the purview of the sitting government. Outgoing administrations should prepare themselves psychologically for ministry and other official websites to look vastly different when the new team assumes office and presents itself to the public.

Post-presidency

Presidents are under intense pressure and scrutiny their entire time in office. Few will spend time actively planning or contemplating concrete post-presidency next steps. Some presidents will want to be advocates for their passions, like human rights, climate change, or poverty reduction. Others may wish to **chronicle their time in office** by writing a book or agreeing to speaking engagements. Others may plan a return to elected office, serve on corporate boards or seek financial gain. Many nations have norms and traditions for what persons should do in their post-presidency. Some nations have laws preventing presidents from working for foreign governments or profiting off the office of the presidency.

Former presidents often retain their public voice. Former presidents will need to decide for themselves whether it is good for the nation to comment on public policy matters of the day. Speaking out too frequently on current events may sow confusion at home and abroad about who is in charge.

Regardless of whether former presidents seek a high or low profile, it is likely they will need a level of governmental support for the rest of their lives. Former presidents need **physical protection** from threats. Former presidents may be afforded a post-service stipend, private travel arrangements, housing and an allowance for a small coterie of assistants.

Former presidents will be well-served by employing a communications/press advisor to manage messaging, speech preparation, public appearances and coordination with the current and other former presidents, as appropriate. Former presidents often make remarks about national tragedies and attend commemorations on the passing of cherished individuals or major national events. Communications teams help arrange these activities.

Some presidents will be caught up in post-presidency legal or legislative inquiries because of actions taken while in office. Former presidents may wish to retain private legal counsel in the event of such circumstances.



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- A. Incoming administration transition team memo
- B. Government agency review memo
- C. Political Appointee tracker
- D. Sample executive office organograms
 - White House organograms (1981-2020)
 - White House chief of staff operations and organograms
 - Office of the Executive Secretariat (U.S. Department of Transportation)
- E. Press release templates
- F. Talking points template
- G. Scheduling templates
 - Notional scheduling template for chief of staff
 - General scheduling templates
- H. Office manual template
- I. Communications strategy template
- J. Chief of staff office operations checklist
- K. Accessibility guidelines for public meetings and events
 - American Bar Association - Planning Accessible Meetings and Events Toolkit
 - Cornell University - Checklist for Planning Accessible Events
 - RespectAbility - Ensuring Virtual Events are Accessible for All
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◆ SECTION III: POST CONFLICT TRANSITIONS ◆

Leadership transitions in post-conflict settings pose unique challenges. Peace accords may be tenuous, unemployment is likely high, domestic markets and public infrastructures may be underdeveloped and crime rates can increase as criminals take advantage of a political and security vacuum. Political negotiations and resettlement strategies may also have to consider internally displaced persons, refugees and a diaspora. Most critically, there is the need to establish and maintain security and public order throughout the country. For all these reasons, executive transitions in post-conflict contexts, in particular, require time, careful planning, consensus building and resources.

Post-conflict leadership transitions vary considerably, with many countries opting for a multi-phase approach that includes an interim government, and possibly, international oversight. This guide is focused on contexts involving an interim government after a violent conflict has ended and a peace deal or cease-fire has been brokered. It provides an overview of the transition processes that occur following the establishment of a peace accord and beyond.

Issues specific to a post-conflict context (e.g., maintaining and strengthening peace, increasing inclusivity, and rebuilding infrastructure and state institutions) may continue after the first post-conflict election. Processes involved in a government transition after this election may more closely follow that of a traditional [parliamentary](#) or [presidential](#) transition.

TRANSITION PHASES

Though post-conflict transitions are highly contextual and dependent on the specific conflict or political environment, they tend to encompass a series of (often overlapping) phases as outlined below.

Phase 1. Establishment of an interim government (transitional authority)

An **interim government or transitional authority** is usually established during the peace negotiations.

There are several different kinds of interim governments, and each has its own set of challenges and responsibilities:

- ◆ Provisional (managed by opposition)
- ◆ Power-sharing (managed by previous regime and opposition)
- ◆ International (managed by the United Nations)
 - Supervisory (UN has full legislative, executive, and administrative authority)
 - Executive (UN has full executive authority, but legislative and executive is shared with domestic powers)
 - Administrative (domestic organs have full legislative authority, but UN has reserve power and is the main administrative authority)
- ◆ Caretaker (managed by the elites of the previous regime)



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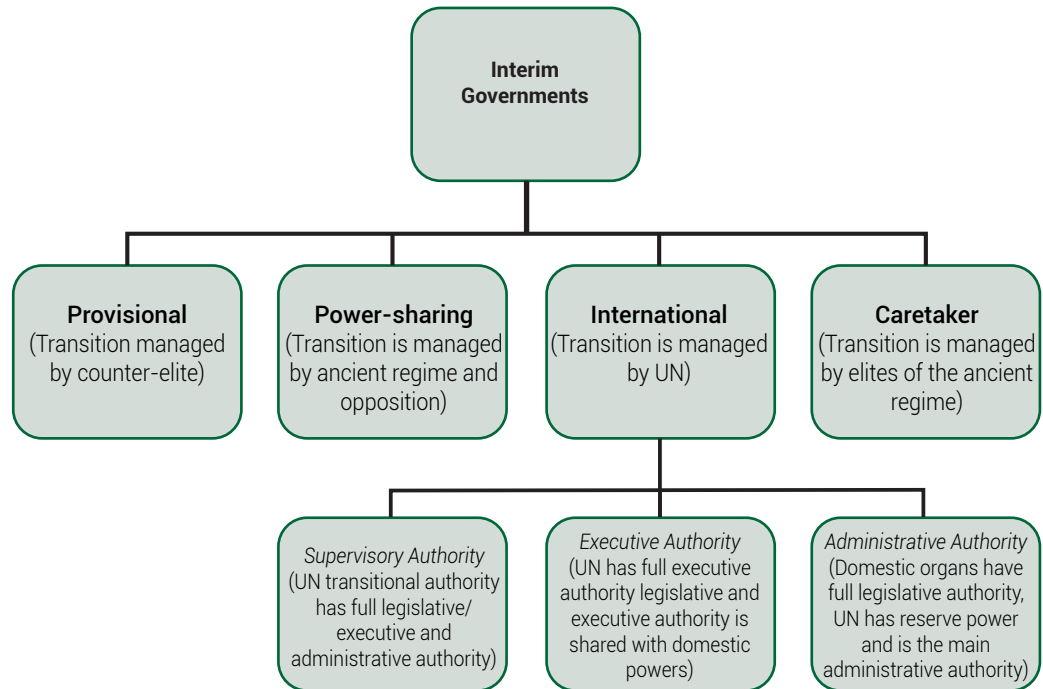
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Interim Governments and Types of International Interim Governments



Source: *"The Perils and Promises of Democratization through UN Transitional Authority – Lessons from Cambodia and East Timor," Democratization (2008)*

If the interim authority is an international body, prolonged oversight runs the risk of de-legitimizing domestic parties, actors and institutions. If the post-conflict process is driven or managed by the United Nations or a regional peacekeeping operation, they must have the support of the parties involved in a cease-fire or peace accord, as well as regional powers to ensure a legitimate and successful process. In either case, it is important for domestic authorities to cooperate with those interim actors to ensure a smooth, transparent and legitimate process that considers potential power-sharing dynamics, political imbalance and post-conflict sentiments among actors within the transition.

Interim administration planning and timetables should be realistic and consider capacity challenges and development needs. Though processes can be initiated, many desired reforms will lay beyond the scope and horizon of the interim government. In Nepal, for example, the reintegration of armed combatants in the country took almost six years.

Phase 2. Post-conflict stabilization

In parallel with the establishment and start-up of an interim authority, efforts are also underway to **establish immediate safety and security**. This involves enforcing peace agreements; ensuring public order and safety; and moving forward with disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) of non-state armed groups (including militias, warlords and private armies) into society.

A comprehensive DDR plan is essential to a sustainable democratic transition in a post-conflict environment. Disarmament and demobilization are critical to stabilization, but reintegration should be weighed against overall security and stability. Reintegration programs should also consider how women, who are disproportionately victims of violence, will specifically be impacted. Long-term security also includes reconciliation processes and a shift toward greater inclusion, which will be described in greater detail later in this guide.



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DDR in Sierra Leone

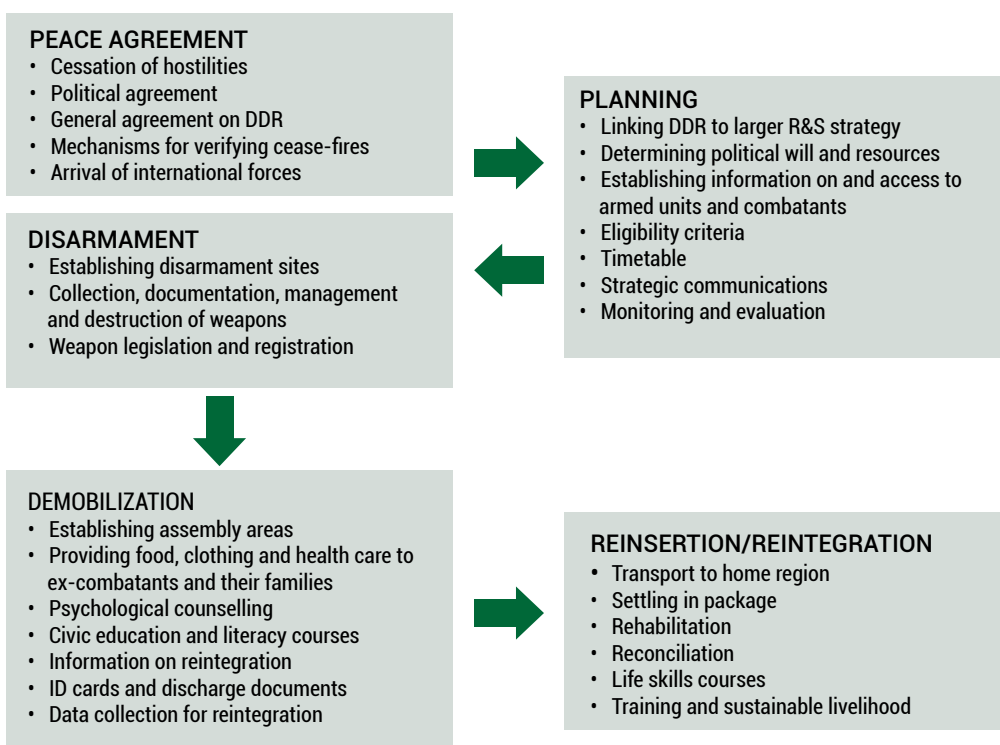
In 1998, Sierra Leone established its first National Committee for Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration with a mandate to coordinate a program of assistance to all ex-combatants. The Committee did not include any representatives from any of the insurgent forces, including the Revolutionary United Front (RUF). As a result, this process was not successful until after agreements signed in 2000 and 2001 that fast-tracked the simultaneous disarmament of the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council, Civil Defense Forces and RUF.¹

DDR processes are most successful when international, national and local authorities work together. While international **peacekeeping forces** are critical to effectively implement a DDR, local authorities drive the process for local communities and citizens.

In conjunction with a DDR program, nations must identify, secure and protect stockpiles of conventional and all other weapons, military depots, equipment and ammunition dumps. They must also protect and secure strategically important institutions (such as government buildings, courthouses and religious institutions) and infrastructure (such as main roads, electrical power stations, water sources and computer servers). These actions are often done with the support of international and/or regional peacekeepers.

Migratory and refugee flows can generate instability and trigger or reignite conflict. They may create an increased demand for resources and work and exacerbate lingering tensions from the conflict that can be exploited by “peace spoilers.” Therefore, **resettling refugees and internally displaced persons** is also critical to safeguarding peace and the success of an inclusive post-conflict transition process.

Classical DDR Process



Source: *USAID Guidance for Democracy and Governance in Post-Conflict Countries (2009)*



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Phase 3. Establishment of institutional and legal frameworks for the transition

The next transitional phase in the post-conflict contexts often surrounds the establishment of **institutional and legal frameworks**, including strengthening the legislative, judicial and executive branches through capacity development, creating inclusive political institutions and establishing or strengthening legal frameworks (including, if applicable, a new constitution). It is during this phase that an interim government may also establish mechanisms for citizen participation and elections.

When a country is working through a constitutional reformation, a **constituent assembly or constitutional assembly (CA)** is often formed to draft or adopt a constitution. Inclusive constitution building processes can represent important steps toward establishing a governance framework, building trust and laying the foundation for a sustainable peace.

Extensive research over more than 30 years has highlighted the importance of **transitional justice and reconciliation processes** during post-conflict settings.² These processes can provide venues where victims give testimony and perpetrators can admit and atone for their actions. Reconciliation processes will present leaders with difficult political trade-offs that may include choices between government and stability or investigations into state crimes and human rights violations that may even involve high-ranking members of the transitional government.³

Phase 4. Establishing an election timeline and holding democratic elections

While developing core institutions and legal frameworks, governments in post-conflict contexts may also begin planning to **hold elections**. While there is often internal and external pressure to hold “free and fair” elections immediately following a peace accord, expedited and ill-prepared election processes may actually increase the likelihood of violence and civil conflict. To ensure peaceful and legitimate elections, it is important to have a security sector that is prepared and strong, as well as an independent election commission. In Liberia in 1997, premature elections were one factor that likely contributed to a resurgence of civil war just two years later.

Electoral integrity in post-conflict contexts require that actors:

- ◆ Set realistic timetable, goals and budget for elections
- ◆ Facilitate decisions on mode of representation and sequence of elections (national/local)
- ◆ Establish and verify voter registry
- ◆ Secure agreements for international and domestic election monitoring
- ◆ Encourage citizen participation through outreach and education (considering literacy levels and alternative approaches to written information).

TRANSITION PLAYERS

There are a number of different constituencies involved in post-conflict contexts, including parties from the peace settlement, including some who may have been involved in the conflict as former combatants. Additionally, officials or civil servants who operated within a government under the outgoing regime may still have a role to play under long-standing legal frameworks in the country. Other actors potentially include United Nations peacekeeping forces and civilian staff, and neighboring countries or regional organizations that have helped broker and maintain a peace accord.



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To quell tensions and prevent future unrest there is often pressure to **build broad coalitions** that include not only former combatants, but also civil society groups and political elites. Excluding key transitional actors, particularly political and military leaders, may result in them becoming “spoilers” working against the peace process. Coordination between all domestic stakeholders and with international assistance organizations and donors is critical.

Outgoing regime

Depending on the nature of the conflict context, a former head of government may be involved in the transition process. Nevertheless, it is typical for other members of the previous regime and their ruling political party to remain at least in the interim in many levels of government. It is critical to consider how to balance justice for potential crimes committed by the previous regime with continuity in basic government operations. Members of the outgoing party may also be included in peace and reconstruction negotiations to ensure that remaining loyalists do not feel marginalized, which can lead to future conflict. Similarly, as the new authorities take office, inevitably bringing with them new staff (political and civil), it is critical to **engage in adaptive and mediation training in order to assuage underlying tensions**, disagreements and potential areas for continued conflict.⁴

Former warring parties may have agreed to or been pressured into a cease-fire agreement or peace accord, though their participation does not guarantee consensus on the transition process. For example, China pressured the Khmer Rouge into accepting a peace process, but violence re-erupted when the former ruling party was reluctant to give up arms and territory and subsequently withdrew. Unless resolved, these situations can derail a transition or spark violence. In cases where the outgoing regime has been exiled and may have formally reestablished a government or influence elsewhere, it is important for a country's new and legally recognized leaders to remain aware. For example, actions taken by exiled governments, in addition to officials in the new government who are loyal to the previous regime and others, can impact decisions and actions in the transition. This also underscores the importance of new leaders to remain informed of actions taken and threats by exiled actors to regain influence and power.

Opposition

A representative from the dominant opposition party may lead an interim administration. The incoming leader and transition actors should also **consider including representatives from other opposition groups** in constitutional assemblies, political appointments and the interim administration under coalition government systems. Power-sharing arrangements like these can help more citizens feel included and invested in the transition, reducing the possibility of peace or transition spoilers and strengthening the move toward an elected democracy.

Non-state armed groups

When a conflict involves non-state armed opposition groups, these groups often seek the support of **disenfranchised communities** that do not have access to power, resources or basic services. These groups may explicitly fight on a populist or ethnocentric platform and provide some resources and services to court the loyalty of these groups. As a result, they may gain power beyond mere military might. They will want their demands to be considered and will need to be a part of any government reforms and rebuilding processes. They can also be peace spoilers who disrupt a governmental transition.

Military

In some post-conflict transition contexts, the military (or key leaders in the military) may still be loyal to the previous regime and become spoilers of the peace accord. In some cases, the military may take control of government and remain in power in accordance with the transitional peace accord.



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Sudan's Democratic Transition

Following the overthrow of Sudanese dictator President Omar al-Bashir in April 2019, civilians continued with large-scale protests to pressure the new transitional military council to sign a formal power-sharing agreement.⁵ The military eventually signed an agreement in August 2019 with a broad-based civilian coalition, the Forces for Freedom and Change. The three-year agreement paves the way for a transition to a civilian-led government.

Therefore, it is important to engage the military in the transition process. Nonetheless, there will have to be a change in leadership and/or structure of the military during the interim administration. This is often part of an agreement with international peacekeeping operations and will be discussed further in this report.

Civil service

The civil service is an important and often overlooked, part of the transition process in a post-conflict context. If the civil service was politicized during the previous government, there may be a lack of trust with the incoming administration. However, a **wholesale purge of the public sector can produce other challenges**, including an increase in unemployment, political backlash and diminished quality of government programs. Working with international partners, it is important to establish a process for vetting and replacing civil service staff if applicable; appointing qualified individuals from a cross-section of society; training officials so that they can move into newly vacant positions with minimum disruption; and communicating these plans across agencies and ministries so that a lack of information does not lead to fear or further conflict.⁶

Dismissal of Civil Service in Iraq

Under Saddam Hussein in Iraq, membership of the Baath party was a requirement for working in the civil service. After the fall of Hussein's regime in 2003, the U.S.-led Coalition Provisional Authority introduced a de-Baathification process that included the dismissal of thousands of people based on their rank in the Baath party (which was not a direct correlation to the commission of any human rights abuses or illegal actions). This undermined the transitioning government offices, left many people unemployed and angry, and helped fuel continued, often violent, political and social conflict.⁷

Civil society organizations

Effective and inclusive civil society organizations (CSOs) should be partners in transition efforts, especially when it comes to reconciliation and communications. When CSOs are included and their contributions considered, it helps build trust in a new administration following a conflict. This is especially the case when a new leader and administration implement two-way feedback channels that advance government transparency, responsiveness and accountability. CSOs can provide new leaders with valuable input regarding the needs of disadvantaged and/or minority communities. CSOs can also play an important part in **establishing a culture of democratic practice and engagement in society**, especially in countries where citizen action was quelled and repressed or groups were targeted with violence for speaking out. For example, the 1991 Colombia Constituent Assembly was a result of not only pressure by several guerrilla groups, but also by social movements. Along these lines, the transition should incorporate mechanisms for citizen engagement in order to reverse any previous practices that may have disempowered communities or citizen groups.



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Minority groups

The historical treatment and current needs of minority groups need to be considered in all transition efforts, especially in a new leader's communications and political strategic planning. A new administration should also **ensure representation** within the top levels of government. If one ethnic group or political party dominates all levels of government at the expense of other groups, it can derail the transition and sow the seeds of future or renewed conflict.

Diaspora

Depending on the length of the conflict, there may be a large diaspora. As these citizens have often lived in more stable countries during the conflict, they may have different education and experience than their fellow citizens in-country. They may also have acquired useful skills, economic wealth and international connections that can help a new administration recover more quickly and with greater stability. They may come from historically marginalized or targeted groups and thus be able to bring perspective and representation to a new government. However, they may have had their citizenship stripped from them, their property seized and their papers destroyed. **Creating ways to welcome and reintegrate the diaspora can facilitate a transition and help the country stabilize and recover with greater speed and inclusion.** The new leader should make sure their external communications reach audiences within the diaspora. New leaders may also consider appointing members of the diaspora in positions of the cabinet and across government, given many have global experiences and education from their time living abroad.

Legislative body

In post-conflict environments, a transitional legislature may be formed as part of the peace agreements. The legislative branch may be weaker than the executive, but legislators have an important role to play in many aspects of the recovery, including electoral design, reconciliation processes and the national budget. The legislature also can have oversight over the executive, providing an important check and balance on the executive's authority and enabling a smooth transition.

By its nature, the legislature is more representative than the executive (even when created by a peace accord). Therefore, **the legislature can help defuse tensions and protect the interests of disenfranchised or minority groups.** However, because of this, a legislature can also reflect the divisions in a country or allegiances to a particular person or group. It is important to a smooth transition that the legislature establishes fair mechanisms for overcoming voting and/or debate stalemates, and includes representation that reflects the overall population rather than a particular elite.

Local governments

Local governments are key partners in the transition, creating cohesion, engaging with and responding to the needs of citizens, demilitarizing regions and building trust. Because they interact more directly with communities, local governments have the capacity for greater representation of and participation by all groups, including minority and historically disadvantaged people, or members of the ethnic group of the outgoing/former regime who may feel targeted with a change of administrations. As a result, **local governments are well suited to deliver many social services**, bolster state legitimacy and develop local conflict resolution mechanisms (including forums and debates) and reconciliation instruments.

Local governments can help the interim national government have a smoother, more inclusive transition. Working with local authorities will help defuse tensions and lead to "quick wins" that can engender trust in the new administration. It is therefore critical to create effective communication and checks and balances between the national and local government structures.



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International community/United Nations

The international community, often the United Nations, will likely be involved in peacebuilding and peacekeeping in a post-conflict transition. They may also oversee an interim government or help rebuild infrastructure and institutions. There will likely be an influx of international humanitarian and development agencies as well. **These international actors can provide vital checks and balances** as internal actors vie for power, resources and representation. However, too much reliance on international assistance can threaten the public's trust in an interim administration and in the new government's ability to peacefully transition to an independent, inclusive and stable democracy.

TRANSITION LEGAL FRAMEWORKS

In addition to the **negotiated peace accord** and potentially a **peacekeeping agreement** with the United Nations, the interim transition typically falls under a **provisional constitution and agreement**. While a provisional constitution will sometimes provide the basis for a longer-term constitution, often a **CA** will form to help draft a new constitution through broad public consultation, debate and consensus.

Creating a new constitution or revising an existing one provides an opportunity to set limits on political powers, including the size of the legislature and method of elections, and to define the rights and responsibilities of all citizens.

CAs contribute to sustainable peace as well. Research from the German Institute for Development Policy shows that post-conflict countries that write a new constitution are significantly less likely to have a recurrence of violent conflict than those that do not adopt a new constitution after a conflict has ended.⁸ However, it is important to separate the peace agreement from the constitutional assembly process. The stakes are too high to rush into creating a new constitution. Immediate security concerns should be addressed first to allow for greater transparency, inclusivity and foresight in the CA process. If a constitution is created as part of the peace accords, a resultant constitution can entrench disagreements and power positions rather than provide a guidepost for a sustainable, inclusive political system.

To that end, it is also important to ensure that the constitutional drafting process is not dominated by one political party, ethnic group or religious group. Again, **inclusion is critical**. Participation by members of minority or disadvantaged groups help provide legal guarantees for these groups. To ensure such participation, gender, ethnic or religious quotas or allocated seats on sectoral committees may be considered. It is also important to ensure that quotas are not put in place only to have people brought in as token members; this can prevent long-term, systematic and inclusive change.

In addition, public participation through referendums can help build trust in the transition, especially if it includes a CA process. It should be decided before a CA process begins whether there will be qualified majority voting or consensus. The new constitution needs to enforce constitutional governance and address issues in the existing legal codes that favor certain groups, limit access to the judiciary and undermine the rule of law. Two other important legal frameworks should be included in both the interim and the formal constitutions: explicit instructions on how and how often elections will be held, and how a formal transition to a newly elected government will occur. Please refer to the resources section at the end of this document for examples of peace accords and provisional constitutional agreements.



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South Africa's Constitutional Assembly

Following the end of apartheid in South Africa, the country held a CA from 1994-1996 to draft an interim constitution. This process was highly participatory, with efforts made to educate the public through media broadcasts of all constitutional debates, village-level consultations and public radio programming about the process. Two million people added their input through email, meetings and surveys. As a result, when it came time to adopt a permanent constitution in 1996, a solid foundation had already been laid. The 1996 constitution included commitments to human rights, language concerning the “amelioration of the conditions of the disadvantaged,” and guaranteed representation for minority parties in legislative decisions.⁹

TRANSITION MECHANICS

Transition teams

Post-conflict transitions are likely to be more complex and unpredictable than traditional presidential or parliamentary transitions. Usually, the international community — including the United Nations, regional organizations, and/or international humanitarian and development agencies — is involved to help secure and maintain peace, provide emergency humanitarian relief, and foster inclusive political, social, and economic development. While there can be an overreliance on these international actors, there are also multiple benefits: the skills needed to defeat a despot or defend human and land rights are not the same as those needed for public administration. Also, in a post-conflict transition, the domestic economy is unlikely robust enough to support necessary reforms, and humanitarian needs are usually too great for one country to respond to without international aid.

As noted earlier, after a particularly violent conflict, a wholesale purging of the previous regime from the government may feel justified. However, it is **important to recognize the pre-existing capacities of all branches and levels of government**. While many elements — including ministries, agencies, and offices — of the previous regime will need to be reformed (and some even abandoned), there will be core systems that can be improved upon rather than overhauled. Adopting comprehensive reforms that improve existing systems will save time and resources and reduce confusion.

The key to a successful transition team (including both domestic and international actors) is to have a common understanding of what kind of government and what kind of peace can be nurtured into sustainability. The following sections will provide an overview of transition mechanics and their importance to the overall sustainability of democratic governance following conflict.

Executive leadership staffing

It is common for post-conflict interim constitutions or peace accords to map out how the president or prime minister will be selected: appointment (often part of the peace accord), direct election (not recommended for interim), or election by legislature. This decision can affect political competition and the development of the long-term government. There may be a power-sharing agreement that rotates the head of government or stipulates quotas in the legislative body and cabinet. Not all peace processes require power-sharing however. Some lay out concessions to avoid a formal arrangement. For instance, after the Nicaraguan Civil War ended, the Contras were promised land, the ability to form a political party and a role in the police force, while the Sandinista army would continue to be the national army. Information on building out a cabinet will be discussed in detail in later sections.



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Appointments process

The appointments process is a critical part of the transition, as the choices a leader makes in their cabinet represents their vision and priorities for the transitional government. Depending on the system of governance in place at the time of the transition, **appointees should be vetted and subject to a public hearing** so that policymakers and the public have access to information related to appointees' history and qualifications to do their intended jobs. The following are steps to take in the appointments process.

Step 1: Assess preexisting ministries.

A functional review of ministries requires the development of a methodology to review the relevance of functions and the effectiveness of existing structures. The methodology can be developed with the assistance of international and local experts.

There may be ministries that no longer make sense if the country is moving from one political system to another. For example, a ministry of state farms under a communist regime may no longer be appropriate under a democratic administration with liberalized economic policies. For the ministries that may need to merge, one of the first steps should be a survey of the existing functions and then an assessment of the effectiveness of the ministry. Through this process, it should become clear which ministries should be kept and restructured. The goal is to streamline decision-making, improve policymaking, and facilitate program and initiative implementation.

Some of the questions to keep in mind during a functional review include:

- ◆ What are the responsibilities of this ministry?
- ◆ What are the concrete functions/activities of this ministry to support the stated responsibilities?
- ◆ Is there functional overlap between ministries?
- ◆ Are there functions that can be eliminated?
- ◆ Are there options for restructuring (for example by merging, dividing, or creating a new ministry)?

Here is a list of common ministries in a democratic government:

- ◆ Ministry of Defense
- ◆ Ministry of Migration
- ◆ Ministry of Education
- ◆ Ministry of Finance
- ◆ Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- ◆ Ministry of Health
- ◆ Ministry of the Interior
- ◆ Ministry of Justice
- ◆ Ministry of Labor
- ◆ Ministry of Public Works
- ◆ Ministry of Trade/Commerce
- ◆ Ministry of Oil/Natural Resources



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Step 2. Specify the mission of each ministry and its lines of authority. These decisions should be binding on all actors, and the process of decision-making should be transparent to members of the government.

Step 3. Select appropriate actors to fill posts. Some cabinet positions may have been negotiated as part of the peace process, whereas others will be determined by the new executive. As cabinet selections represent the vision and priorities of the leader, it is critical to consider different genders, minorities and underserved communities in this selection process. Often there is also an appointments secretary or team to help in the search and vetting process. The higher-level positions will require a greater degree of scrutiny. Junior appointees can be interviewed and vetted by lower-ranking members of the new administration.

The cabinet formation process should be consistent with the interim policy guidelines or laws. For example, some constitutions specify the procedures for selecting and removing the cabinet or council of ministers. In many states, the head of government nominates or appoints the cabinet or council of ministers. However, for an interim government, the negotiated peace accord may limit the ability of the executive to appoint the cabinet. An interim constitution may specify whether the head of government appoints all members of the cabinet and whether the legislature needs to approve each appointment. **Legislative approval** can act as a check on favoritism or corruption. In some cases, depending on the context, legislative oversight and committee approval is required to approve appointed cabinet ministers and other political personnel. It is important to note that this is a critical representative process, and one that allows the **public access into decision-making processes** in the new government. This transparency also ensures that ministers are appointed based on their knowledge and expertise in that specific policy or administrative area—not a result of nepotism or informal ties to actors in government.

The head of government not only appoints cabinet members but also executives/directors at key government agencies, ambassadors, judgeships and advisors. Thus, there may be other opportunities to appoint qualified political allies and coalition-builders. Some important considerations for these posts include the following:

- ◆ **Quotas:** There may be specifications on quotas, particularly for women's or minority representation. For example, the 2005 Constitution of Burundi stipulates a minimum quota of 30 percent women in the government, including the National Assembly. As a result, women's representation has increased from 12 percent in 2005 to 36.8 percent in 2020 in the executive branch, and from 19 percent to 31 percent in the upper chamber of the National Assembly.¹⁰ Lebanon stipulates that half its cabinet members should be Muslim and half Christian.¹¹
- ◆ **Negotiated positions:** In cases where positions have been negotiated as part of the peace process, some cabinet members may be former enemies. Dividing cabinet positions among political parties or factions may reduce the risk that one of those appointees or their party will act as a peace spoiler. However, it could give one person or one party undue influence over state institutions and resources, particularly if natural resources were a source of the conflict. Take all of these factors into consideration when making an appointment. For example, the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia created a power-sharing agreement that divided rather than unified the government by creating two separate party divisions within every ministry, which weakened the administration and lowered trust and authority.¹²
- ◆ **Appointees vying for political influence:** Some members of the cabinet may see their appointment as a legitimizing tool and a way to gain personal wealth, avoid prosecution or further their campaign for an elected position. To avoid this as much as possible, develop ethics and other accountability protocols. These safeguards can include internal auditing through an office of auditor-general. An auditor-general audits all government spending, usually on an annual basis. The auditor-general then reports their findings to the legislature/parliament, as well as to the general public. These rules should also cover and prohibit nepotism and other unethical hiring practices.



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Audit Service Sierra Leone

In 2004, Sierra Leone established the Audit Service Sierra Leone (ASSL) as an independent agency to audit national and local government expenditures, in addition to public enterprises, central banks and other state-owned financial organizations. In its initial years, the ASSL experienced challenges due to a relatively weak infrastructure and technological capacities, in addition to a lack of human and financial resources. Lacking a clear strategy, ASSL audit reports were neither published nor reviewed by the national legislature. Following two assessments, the ASSL initiated several reforms, including mandates for regularly published reports by the nation's auditor general, in addition to periodic scrutiny and review by the legislature. The ASSL now allows for public access to reports and regularly hosts public broadcasts providing access to information on national fiduciary risk and public resource capacity.¹³

- ◆ **Including opposition or members of rival groups:** Staff appointment decisions may involve trade-offs between rewarding political loyalty versus meritocratic recruitment based on skill sets and experience. Military and political leaders do not always have education and experience in administration and government. In the beginning and for top positions, it may be necessary to allow for political considerations. However, establishing a system of merit-based appointments, as feasible, will help develop the new administration's technical and administrative capacity – and may provide opportunities for previously marginalized groups.
- ◆ **Diaspora:** In addition to political stakeholders involved in the peace accord, the new government may consider diaspora members for appointments. This is especially relevant in countries where a large portion of society left as a result of the conflict and may have obtained diverse global knowledge. Diaspora members may offer much-needed expertise and perspective.
- ◆ **Vetting:** In addition to former and current political parties, international organizations, national universities, prominent unions and legal associations will likely present candidates for appointments. It is helpful to have a process for screening potential appointees. All appointees should be vetted for conflict of interest and possible war crimes. To this end, each appointee should disclose financial holdings, any potential conflicts of interest, all past employers, outside activities, roles in previous governments (including advisory) and income outside of employment. It is helpful to standardize a form for each appointee to fill out disclosing this information. This allows the vetters to more easily see issues — financial, ethical or personal — that may disqualify an appointee from serving in the new administration. In some cases, there may be ways to remedy a conflict of interest, such as divesting from a corporation.

The importance of inclusion

Inclusion in a post-conflict setting involves bringing multiple political parties, women, ethnic and religious minorities, and other disadvantaged groups into the government and the transition process to **avoid creating a government run by one elite group**. Forming a representative government will more effectively address the concerns of all citizens and will help avoid or dispel tensions that could reignite a conflict. Inclusivity is especially critical during a transition period when tensions are high and many citizens, particularly those who are from previously targeted groups, want to have their grievances and voices heard — sometimes for the first time. Inclusion is a long-term goal in a post-conflict setting, requiring commitment from both domestic and international actors.

All parties to the conflict should be part of political decision-making structures to prevent a return to violence and foster a focus on nonviolent strategies. However, not all parties need to be part of a governing coalition. During peace negotiations, it is important to **make concerted efforts to bring together leaders from the various parties and incentivize information-sharing** through participation in decision-making processes so that demands can be known, compromises can be explored and tensions can be reduced.



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When considering which parties to bring into the decision-making process and/or governing coalition during a transition, the following issues may be considered:

- ◆ How is power currently distributed and used between different groups at local, national and regional levels, and beneath the surface of formal institutions?
- ◆ Which groups are most excluded from power and may use violence?
- ◆ What type of political inclusion is most likely to reduce the risks of violence in the short- and long-term?

Global examples show that “excessive consensus”¹⁴ through coalitions that are too big can hamper a nascent democracy, given they can lead to super majority influence and neglect of opposition and other citizen interests. It is also important that the interests of the majority are not sacrificed for the interests of another party that has undue influence, particularly from a foreign government. This can perpetuate and exaggerate divisions and ethnic tensions, as well as render an administration less effective.

The 1995 Dayton Agreement ended the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina, creating decentralized governance structures arrayed along the country’s warring ethnic lines. The country’s governing system features ethnic-based decision-making that often blocks political, social and economic advancement that can lead to good governance, economic growth and Euroatlantic integration. The ethnic equities enshrined under Dayton neither preclude nor incentivize political cooperation across ethnic boundaries.¹⁵



Serbian President Slobodan Milošević, President Alija Izetbegovic of Bosnia-Herzegovina and President Franjo Tudjman of Croatia initial the Dayton Peace Accords ending the ethnic fighting in Bosnia-Herzegovina, December 14, 1994.

Photo credit: Everett Collection Inc/Alamy Stock Photo



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SHORT-TERM PLANNING AND DELIVERABLES/FIRST 100 DAYS¹⁶

The first months of a new administration are critical to solidifying processes in government to ensure the leader has the tools and capacity to govern quickly and effectively. During this time, a new administration will be working to build the government while at the same time exercising leadership. To be successful in this process, *security, trust and capacity* are critical. This means a new administration needs to simultaneously engage in peacebuilding, move toward democratization, and rebuild the state. To do all three effectively, an interim administration should have a clear agenda; legal capacity to carry out said agenda; clear and consistent communication with the public and international community; and buy-in from the international community, a majority of local elite, and a large portion of the local electorate.

At the start of a new administration, there is typically great public scrutiny on the agenda and actions of the interim head of government. To best plan, the executive will want to meet several times a week with their senior leadership team during the transition to share vital information, coordinate external messaging and align priorities across government.

Stabilization

The first thing on any post-conflict transition agenda is the establishment of stability and security. In a post-conflict context, national security is paramount.

Key steps in establishing immediate security:

- ◆ Agree on deployment of peacekeepers
- ◆ Coordinate with key defense actors, including international peacekeeping mission to establish a safe and secure environment
 - ◆ Remove landmines
 - ◆ Begin DDR
 - ◆ Vet and professionalize police and army
 - ◆ Ensure the protection of war crime evidence
- ◆ Develop a comprehensive plan for security sector reform
 - ◆ Implement human rights monitoring mechanisms
 - ◆ Repatriate and resettle refugees and IDPs

- ◆ *Agree on deployment or continuation of peacekeepers.* This step often takes place in the process of negotiating a peace deal or cease-fire. Brokers of the peace deal will work with regional or international security forces to coordinate peacekeeper deployment per the needs of the country or as related to negotiations.
- ◆ *Coordinate with key defense actors, including the international peacekeeping mission to establish a safe and secure environment.* Following the decision to deploy (or extend) peacekeepers, executives must develop, in consultation with the Ministry of Defense, integrated command, control, intelligence and information-sharing arrangements among international peacekeepers, national and regional military and civilian police forces. This process includes the integration of some armed groups into the national army. It is also important to identify, secure and protect stockpiles of conventional and all other weapons, military depots, equipment and ammunition dumps, as well as strategically important institutions, such as government buildings, courthouses and religious institutions, in coordination with any international and/or regional peacekeepers that are operating in-country. The head of government must have daily national security briefings (and if a crisis erupts or reignites, then more often) from the ministry of defense,



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Former combatants of the Séléka in a DDR-process, Bria, Central African Republic, February 25, 2017.

Photo credit: Yogi Black/Alamy Stock Photo

national security advisor, director of national intelligence, and the liaison with or representative from the international peacekeeping operations. A regular daily briefing held at the same time each day will ensure that the myriad security forces, ministries connected to and impacted by security issues, and the executive will all be on the same page about the most important factor in this transition process — security.

- ◆ **Remove landmines.** In addition to identifying, securing, and protecting stockpiles of conventional and all other weapons, military depots, equipment, and ammunition dumps, it is critical, if applicable, to begin a process of demining the country. Demining not only reduces security risks, but it also facilitates humanitarian relief and economic development by clearing roads and farmland. Usually demining is done in coordination with specialized international agencies, such as the Danish Demining Group, Humanity and Inclusion, Japan Mine Action Service or the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS).
- ◆ **Begin DDR.** Depending on the context of the conflict, DDR should be coordinated and include local governments, particularly if the conflict ended through a negotiated settlement. If the conflict ended through a one-sided victory, perhaps reforming the security sector takes priority. Nonetheless, a DDR process will be critical to a sustained and deepened peace. As stated earlier, a DDR process can succeed if international, national and local authorities work together. For example, in Cambodia and Mozambique, the reintegration of former combatants was more important to immediate security, while in Haiti, it was more important to the new government to immediately overhaul the police force.
- ◆ **Vet and professionalize police and army.** Leaders in the police and military may still be loyal to the previous regime in a post-conflict context and can easily become spoilers of the peace accord. In some cases, the military may take power and remain in power in accordance with a transitional peace accord, as is the case currently in Sudan following the 2019 transition.¹⁷ Nonetheless, there needs to be a vetting process to exclude people suspected of human rights abuses, war crimes, or crimes against humanity in a transition process. Usually, a new government will want to change military and police leadership and restructure these institutions during the interim administration. These steps are often part of an agreement with international peacekeeping operations and will be discussed further in this report. In addition, there should be efforts to increase the professionalism of military and police forces, including training on the interim constitution, human rights agreements, and citizens' rights.
- ◆ **Ensure the protection of war crime evidence.** The team managing the transition will have to make every effort to secure records left over from the previous regime in order to help the prosecution and/or reconciliation processes.



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- ◆ **Develop a comprehensive plan for security sector reform.** Any large-scale security force purge should be conducted with great caution due to the risk of unintended destabilizing effects, including the potential for violent conflict or an increase in crime levels. As the police and military are restructured and reformed, efforts should be made to include people from traditionally underrepresented groups, particularly groups targeted by the previous regime. Greater inclusivity improves overall trust in both the security forces and the new government, and it fosters a heightened sense of safety among previously targeted groups. However, integration should be done gradually and with considerable diversity, inclusion and tolerance training, as well as incentives to encourage integration at all levels and disincentives for hate speech, exclusion or harassment. Also critical to overall security is the strengthening of civilian oversight, particularly in countries where regimes relied on personal power or the power of their ethnic group. Civilian oversight includes establishing checks and balances through legislative select committees, various ministerial oversight mechanisms such as a national security council and ministry of defense¹⁸, and transparency and openness in terms of security funding (including financial auditing bodies), as well as in military and police recruitment.
- ◆ **Implement human rights monitoring mechanisms.** Implement human rights monitoring mechanisms, such as the creation of an independent ombudsman's office, a center for human rights, or a whistleblower protection agency, to protect individual rights and increase stability. After signing the Good Friday Agreement, for example, Northern Ireland, with the backing of the UN, created the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission, an independent national human rights institution to ensure the government and other public bodies respect and uphold the human rights of everyone. Similarly, the Human Rights Ombudsman of Bosnia and Herzegovina is an independent public institution created following the war in Bosnia to ensure the protection of individual human rights. It hears complaints related to human rights violations committed by any authority in the country.
- ◆ **Repatriate and resettle refugees and IDPs.** Internal migration and refugee flows can generate instability and trigger or reignite conflict if they generate an increased demand for resources and work. There are often lingering tensions among these communities from the conflict that can be exploited by peace spoilers. Therefore, resettling refugees and IDPs is also critical to safeguarding peace and allowing for an inclusive post-conflict transition process. However, the tensions can also disrupt a resettlement process, especially if many of the refugees were forced out of their communities because of their ethnic and/or religious identities or if some of the refugees were also perpetrators of violence. This is another example of when a leader will have to make hard decisions between the competing needs for resettlement, community security and long-term reconciliation. A new government can work with its ministry of migration, key international actors (e.g., UNHCR), and local governments to develop protocols, safe spaces and reintegration programs and incentives.

Building trust

Though earning and sustaining public trust is a long-term endeavor, the initial 100 days are a critical period for putting measures in place that lay the foundation for citizen confidence and state legitimacy.

- ◆ **Trust among actors within government**

Members of the new interim government may be working alongside actors with loyalties to the past regime. The new interim head of government may also have their own informal allegiances or advisors who support their decision-making but may be controversial to the public. In this case, some leaders may choose to replace those individuals with their own loyalists. Personnel decisions may bring adverse political consequences. A major challenge for the new leader is **helping parties work together and reach consensus around common goals** under the auspices of the transitional democratic government. As progress is never linear, setbacks are inevitable.



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◆ Citizen trust and reconciliation

At the start of a new government, many citizens may still feel loyal to the previous regime. Others may have been victims of the previous regimes' actions and may be distrustful of government overall. Still others may be long-term residents but not (or not yet) citizens, limiting their opportunities for participation. Moreover, there may be long-standing concerns regarding corruption, ineffectiveness or government waste. All of these opinions will not be changed nor experiences improved within the first 100 days, but significant progress can be achieved.

Managing public expectations is a critical task. Governments can use polling, focus groups and other means of **citizen consultation to identify priority demands**. In some cases, new leaders are advised to identify and pursue “quick wins” that will demonstrate tangible progress. An example of a quick win is providing emergency employment for priority sectors, such as former combatants, internally displaced persons and returnees. This employment — building infrastructure or rebuilding agriculture — can benefit the entire country

and support long-term economic growth. Another “quick win” might be simplifying the business registration processes to spur domestic innovation and commerce, and foreign investment. Similarly, mosquito net distribution in regions with high rates of mosquito-borne illnesses is a tangible activity with the potential for impactful results in vulnerable communities and households.

Another way to create or restore trust is to facilitate the delivery of emergency humanitarian aid. Too often, humanitarian aid is withheld or delayed in certain regions due to political maneuvering. Allowing people to receive the assistance they need for basic survival not only helps build trust in the administration, it also reduces some basic impediments to better and more inclusive citizen participation in government.

Reconciliation processes represent another avenue for citizen engagement, trust-building and enhanced social cohesion. If possible, the design of these processes should be announced within the first 100 days. Reconciliation processes are never simple processes. In some instances, perpetrators have lied about or distorted the facts relating to their war crimes or abuses. In others, recommendations have been ignored by the interim or elected government, particularly when top officials are implicated in crimes or conflicts of interest. As former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan noted, “For it to succeed, everyone must be committed. If it is not promoted with sincere intentions or if complicated realities are reduced to sensational headlines, the process is doomed to fail.”¹⁹

To increase the effectiveness of reconciliation processes, interim and subsequent governments need to be forthright: never deny proven atrocities committed by the state, and address torture and mistreatment of political prisoners. These reconciliation initiatives should be created in concert with **psycho-social support for victims and communities** bearing witness. A reconciliation process may be uncomfortable for the executive, their political party and/or their allies, but it is necessary for long-term stability. Transparency and accountability for perpetrators of atrocities (even if they are



Ivory Coast's President Alassane Ouattara speaks with former Prime Minister Charles Konan Banny (R) before a meeting in Abidjan on May 1, 2011. Alassane said former Prime Minister Banny would head a truth and reconciliation commission, set up to heal divisions after months of conflict. He made the announcement at a meeting with Nobel Laureate Desmond Tutu, former Irish president Mary Robinson and former U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan, who visited the country to promote reconciliation.

Photo credit: Thierry Gouegnon, Reuters/Alamy Stock



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given amnesty) can help resolve historical grievances, allow victims to move on or get help, rebuild foundations for greater peace among groups, build trust in a nascent government and nation, and help avoid a resurgence in violence.

Depending on the context, toward the end of the first 100 days, it is also important to develop timelines for a CA, local elections and national elections. And, if not provided for in the interim constitution, ensure that human rights, freedom of the press and freedom of speech are protected and enshrined in the final constitution.

Addressing spoilers

As referenced, parties fearing that peace threatens their interests may act as spoilers. These actors are not just former armed combatants or elites that may have been pushed out of power through the peace accord. Spoilers can also be businesses that profited directly from the conflict and as a result do not want a sustained peace, or individuals who feel they were slighted by the power-sharing arrangement or new administration. Effective strategies for dealing with spoilers require understanding their nature and interests. *Can their demands be met by including them in the new administration or new initiatives, or can new initiatives reflect their interests more? Or will they only be satisfied with achieving total power?*

If inclusion is seen as a viable strategy, the new government can seek to engage them in the peace and reconstruction process. Rewards for cooperation and disincentives for defection should be built into peace negotiations and transitional legal and economic development frameworks. On the other hand, dealing with “total spoilers” may require more coercive strategies, grounded in the threat of punishment.

Economic policymaking

The first 100 days should also focus on defining and communicating priorities related to economic recovery. Violent conflict, particularly if prolonged, can decimate an economy as often key infrastructure is destroyed; education and training go stagnant; and the workforce itself is reduced through emigration, intimidation, injuries and death. As a result, markets become fragmented, and illicit flows of arms, goods, credit, and cash increase; trust in the government and its economy decreases among citizens, regional partners and the international community; and hidden and predatory transactions threaten security and economic development.

Achieving economic stability requires the cooperation of actors across government and with the legislature. Economic planning in post-conflict contexts often focuses on four priority policy aims:

1. **Macroeconomic stabilization**, which requires monetary and fiscal policies that align the currency to the global markets, manage inflation and establish transparent management and accountability systems;
2. **Control over illicit economy and economic-based threats**, so that natural resources are managed with transparency and greater sustainability and so that government financial and other resources are not controlled by outside and/or predatory actors;
3. **Market economy sustainability**, which requires investment in human capital, market physical infrastructure and financial sector development; and
4. **Employment generation**, which will include trade-offs, particularly in the immediate post-peace accord transition when legal markets may be so damaged that a significant portion of the population relies on illicit markets for their basic goods or employment.²⁰



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Developing capacities

Concurrent with establishing and building existing peace and security measures in the transition is the need to restore institutional and human capacities. First, the incoming government will need physical space. The transition can establish a base for the executive branch while repairs to existing buildings and new construction are completed, as needed. The new space should be a separate building from that of the peacekeeping operations, even if the executive branch building is guarded by international peacekeepers in the early days.

After securing critical institutions and infrastructure, it is important to rebuild and restore government buildings, electricity and water grids. This improves security, faith in the government and capacity to deliver humanitarian aid and implement economic development.

Quickly reopening, improving and expanding educational and health care facilities will contribute to long-term health, security and development. The reopening of these institutions also signals security and improves trust in an administration.

INSTITUTIONAL PROCESSES AND PRACTICES

Executive-legislative relations

In post-conflict environments, the legislative branch may be weaker than the executive. Nonetheless, they have an important role to play in many aspects of the recovery, including constitution making, electoral design, legislating reconciliation processes and the national budget. Legislatures can also help defuse tensions and help citizens feel represented in a new government.

A key aim for the new government should be the establishment of a functioning relationship with the legislative branch, while recognizing that legislators act as a check and balance on the executive. A functioning relationship requires consistent communication between top executive advisors — or a **legislative liaison team**²¹ — with the heads of the legislative branches and key legislators from the top parties. This includes regular meetings and information-sharing both from the executive to the legislature and vice-versa. Meeting documents, key concession contracts and other relevant information to the executive should all be maintained on a secure database internal to the government. Information on the status of bills and other legislative business, in addition to information concerning public goods, programs and funding, should be made publicly available to ensure transparency into government actions and affairs. As relations between the executive and legislative branches of government can sometimes be contentious, it is important to also **develop mechanisms to resolve disputes between the branches of government.**

Legislatures can also help defuse tensions and help citizens feel represented in a new government.

Judiciary

The judiciary is a critical institution in a post-conflict context. The judiciary serves as a mechanism for safety, security, reconciliation and justice. Even if stabilization is achieved, a lasting peace depends on the development of an independent and effective justice system.

The formal judicial system includes courts, prosecutors, prisons and public defenders, along with the police. There are also informal, or less formal, methods to pursue justice. These include non-court mediation and arbitration, and traditional justice, such as tribal or elder councils. A new



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administration can choose to formalize those methods, as Nigeria did in its constitution, which allows for English law-based courts, Sharia courts and traditional courts.²²

During the transition, the executive and the ministry of justice should work together to:

- ◆ Expand the capacity of the formal judicial system, working with international experts and experts from the diaspora. This can be done in a number of creative ways, including training community leaders to become justices of the peace so they can adjudicate in minor cases, relieving some pressure on formal courts and providing services in areas where there may not be a formal court presence. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, mobile courts were established so that judges, prosecutors and lawyers could travel to rural and remote areas to hold court.
- ◆ Establish public defender offices through the attorney general or through state/local court authorities. The immediate judicial focuses of the administration may be on the prosecution of war criminals, the reconciliation process and the Constitutional Assembly, but public defenders expand access, increase equity, improve the standards of investigations and adjudications and improve the accountability of police and the judiciary itself.
- ◆ Provide mechanisms to resolve land and natural resource disputes.
- ◆ Clarify and codify the relationship between the formal and informal judicial systems. As part of this process, it is critical to strengthen the informal judicial institutions' effectiveness and adherence to national and international human rights standards. This is an important step because many people will seek out informal mechanisms because they are often cheaper, quicker, more accessible and conducted in their native languages.
- ◆ Begin a campaign to educate citizens, particularly underserved and marginalized populations, about their rights, what justice mechanisms are available and how to access them. Public outreach should be done in all local languages and through written and verbal methods to ensure wide dissemination. Radio programs, community leaders, public meetings, newspaper articles and citizen help desks within the courts and police stations can all be used. For example, the East Timor Ministry of Justice developed a legal glossary in four languages to create a common vocabulary for legal professionals and citizens.²³

Civil service

In an interim government, there may be a mix of new and existing ministries. The existing ministries likely have internal processes — and perhaps documents outlining these processes — for coordination



Nepal's former President Ram Baran Yadav (L) greets Nepal's then newly-elected President Bidhya Devi Bhandari during the oath-taking ceremony in Kathmandu, Nepal, October 29, 2015. Nepal's parliament elected Bidhya Devi Bhandari, vice chairperson of the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist) as the country's first female president.

Photo credit: © Sunil Sharma/
Xinhua/Alamy Live News



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and communication with the executive and other ministries and agencies. New ministries should model their processes after the most effective extant processes.

In addition to coordinating ministry affairs, the civil service is vital to restoring security and trust in the government, as well as to rebuilding and improving responsiveness to citizens' needs.

Each ministry should have an office or small team dedicated to **internal and external coordination**. Generally, career civil servants, rather than political appointees, should be responsible for transmitting documents, handling requests for assistance and communicating with other ministries' staff. As new ministries are staffed, it is important to keep all ministries and the executive up to date on key staff, particularly changes to members of the intra-ministerial liaison teams.

In addition to coordinating ministry affairs, the civil service is vital to restoring security and trust in the government, as well as to rebuilding and improving responsiveness to citizens' needs. Depending on the nature of the peace negotiation and subsequent government establishment, executives may consider working with international partners to **establish a course for vetting and replacing** directors in civil service, appointing qualified individuals and communicating these plans.

Key elements in the effective utilization of civil service:

- ◆ Determine and define the ministries, agencies and other government bodies, as well as the numbers of employees in each that are required for immediate and longer-term needs, taking into consideration short-term and longer-term budget constraints.
- ◆ Avoid hiring large numbers of people to placate patronage networks or stack the government with members of a particular political party, as this will drain an already stressed national budget and likely introduce inefficiencies and tensions into the agencies, departments, and divisions where these new staff are placed.
- ◆ Create a transparent process to vet executives, appointees and civil service employees. This can be done in consultation with the peacekeeping mission, international organizations and civil society organizations.
- ◆ Define vetting criteria, which may include a person's citizenship, human rights record, professional conduct, criminal history, professional competence and conduct, and role in the conflict.
- ◆ Consider creating an independent ad hoc vetting commission to make this process more efficient and trustworthy.
- ◆ Review the skills of executive officials, civil servants and, when applicable, employees of state-owned enterprises.
- ◆ Work with the international community, including the civilian offices of the peacekeeping mission and international development agencies, to develop and provide management technical assistance and training to new appointees.
- ◆ Consider holding all-staff or executive staff meetings with career civil servants to foster communication and coordination and help everyone work toward the common goals of the administration and peace accord.
- ◆ Encourage members of the diaspora with leadership and specific skills to return and apply for civil service positions.



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Local government

Local governments are key partners in creating cohesion, engaging with and responding to the needs of citizens, demilitarizing regions and building trust. They are well-suited to deliver many social services, bolster state legitimacy and develop local conflict resolution mechanisms (including forums and debates) and reconciliation instruments. When local governments participate in local-level planning, project prioritization and resource mobilization, the potential for renewed conflicts is decreased. Moreover, it is at the local level that most citizens will perceive “quick wins” that improve their daily lives and contribute to **trust and stability**.

Local government systems may have been weakened considerably during the conflict. If there are new or altered subnational administrative units, tensions may arise as actors vie for local influence. If one group dominates local government positions of power and institutions, other groups may feel marginalized or discriminated against, particularly if members of the dominant group were associated with the previous regime and/or any antagonistic actions or policies. Tensions may also arise from real or perceived inequities in the allocation of local government resources along geographic, religious, ethnic or other lines. Moreover, national political actors or parties may exploit these tensions. In addition, if resource allocation is perceived to be unfair, wealthier or resource-rich regions may potentially seek to secede from the national state, or they may become the target of influence by a neighboring state. It should be noted that local government resources are more likely than national government resources to be violently appropriated by armed groups. As a result, it is important for the new government to establish robust communication and coordination channels with the local governments early on.

The new government may be under pressure to immediately rebuild local institutions based on what existed previously. However, it may be prudent to more carefully assess the effectiveness of former structures and make substantive changes based on current and expected needs.

Key elements of effective work with local and subnational actors:

- ◆ Work with local governments to create consistent dispute mechanisms for local issues and the allocation of natural resources in a region.
- ◆ Work with the chief of staff or head of communications and local governments to create community forums to listen to the needs of a variety of constituents and communicate the priorities and initiatives of the administration.
- ◆ Hold regular meetings between local governors and the national government to share information. This will strengthen ties with the national offices, foster greater and more effective responsiveness and create another avenue for public education. Ensure national funds, resources and aid are going to local governments through transparent systems that are tracked through secure IT networks. However, it is also advisable to have a monitoring and evaluation mechanism. If funds or resources go “missing,” try to track and recover them as soon as possible and prosecute any illegal diversions. Most post-conflict local government infrastructure and coffers will have been decimated by violence.
- ◆ Many traditional institutions, like councils of elders, may still be intact. Be sure to work with these traditional leaders to increase support for and participation in local governments as they are being rebuilt.
- ◆ Work with international donors and local governments to provide and improve service delivery for emergency humanitarian assistance, infrastructure improvements and basic services such as water, electricity, health care and education.



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Internal coordination

Clear procedures for communicating and coordinating among the offices within the executive are paramount for effective and informed decision-making. Thus, an **executive secretariat should be tasked with establishing rules and procedures on how information is received, processed, shared and stored**. Other offices in the executive and in the ministries should direct all formal requests to the executive secretariat. These requests and any resultant actions or responses should be tracked in one place.

It is also important for the head of government to have a daily meeting with the highest advisors and counselors, and a weekly coordination meeting that includes all senior executive staff. These meetings should have agendas, including a briefing on progress since the previous meeting and a moderator to keep discussions on track.

User-friendly and secure information technology is critical for protecting national security and assets. It may be necessary to offer training and assistance with basic computer skills and phone systems. In addition, it is important to control access to physical working spaces, as well as the information cloud. This will require setting up a vetting and badge system for all staff, employees and visitors.

Tony Blair's Prime Minister Delivery Unit

In 2001, UK Prime Minister Tony Blair established a Prime Minister's Delivery Unit composed of a small team of individuals working to support and analyze information on key policy priorities. Since then, the concept of "delivery units" (coined in some governments as Presidential Delivery Units, Prime Minister Delivery Units, Special Delivery Units, Information Delivery Units, etc.) have become an important way for new executives to coordinate information-sharing between the executive office and line ministries and agencies (both nationally and subnationally) on key policy developments and progress on national interests. Delivery units have several main functions including: *tracking the executive's progress on fulfilling key areas of reform, investigating and intervening to solve problems as they arise, providing scrutiny on policy proposals and addressing gaps in delivery capacity*. Delivery units have been especially critical in post-conflict contexts, in addition to countries in which the executive works through a national crisis at the time they assume office.²⁴ For example, in Malaysia in 2009 and 2010, the executive delivery unit supported a reduction in street crime after coordinating information flow between the Minister of Home Affairs and key stakeholders in civil society to develop policies to reduce crime. In 2010, newly elected President of Sierra Leone, Ernest Bai Koroma, established a Strategy and Policy Unit, which succeeded in turning around several environmental projects and improving service delivery in the country.²⁵ Building on the original model developed in 2001, the Tony Blair Institute for Global Change (TBI) today works to support delivery unit-style coordination between new executives and their ministries and local governments in order to strengthen service delivery capacity and enable effective coordination on national and citizen priorities. TBI is currently supporting executive coordination support in Sierra Leone, Liberia, Guinea, Malawi, Nigeria, Rwanda and Kenya.²⁶

Asset tracking

It is important for a new administration to identify, secure and protect stockpiles of conventional and all other weapons, military depots, equipment and ammunition dumps. In addition, the new government should **take stock of all government assets**, including natural resources, government-owned businesses and buildings, current concessions contracts with international companies or governments and holdings in the central bank.



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Next, the new leader must assess the annual national budget, estimating expenditure increases, the implications of economic reforms and the volume of anticipated international aid. Critical government functions should not be solely funded through donor assistance; to the extent they are in the short-term, there should be a plan to phase-out for long-term fiscal stability. It is also important to have a plan for transparent asset tracking, retrieval, management and redistribution. This work can be done in partnership with global actors, such as the World Bank,²⁷ IMF, UN and others who monitor asset distribution in post-conflict nations and can be a condition for continued assistance. Creating a transparent system sends a signal to the public that the new government has regained control over appropriate assets management and a commitment to openness and integrity.

Key steps in the asset tracking process:

- ◆ Implement a plan for national government revenue generation, management, and collection. Consult with local governments during this process to ensure local areas (e.g., states or counties) are contributing and receiving a proportional share of resources based on numbers of people, needs, and how each area was impacted by the conflict.
- ◆ Work with the international community and the ministries of finance and commerce to create and build capacities to collect taxes, re-negotiate concessions contracts and manage the national budget. Depending on the nature of the post-conflict or contract-protracted assets situation, consider working with the World Bank, UN, IMF or local organizations that provide legal resources for the retention and discovery of transnational asset issues. Work with these agencies can also include developing plans for local banking, customs, taxation and financial services.
- ◆ Provide ongoing technical support to ensure transparent and non-corrupt revenue generation and collection.
- ◆ Create or bolster oversight mechanisms, including the auditor-general's office or a committee in the legislature dedicated to assets recovery, tracking and overall management.

ASSUMING LEADERSHIP

Before taking the oath of office

Interim-Governance During a Transition

Depending on the stage of the peace process and corresponding elections, a short-term interim leader may facilitate the transition to a longer-term interim, non-elected government. This figure will often only be in power once a peace accord is signed until a new government takes office. For example, in Liberia, the peace accords were signed in August 2003, but the National Transition Government of Liberia did not take office until October 2003. In between, former President Charles Taylor's Vice President Moses Blah assumed the position of interim president. Having an interim president, even if only for a few months, gave the parties to the peace accord time to agree upon and put forth nominations for key government positions. It also gave the next interim president Gyude Bryant, a businessman from Monrovia, time to become acquainted with what was expected and required of him and his administration.²⁸

If possible, incoming leaders can begin forming their executive leadership team and meeting with key members of the civil service and holdover ministry staff before taking office, in order to **maximize preparedness for day one**.



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Inauguration day

The first day of office is both chaotic and heavy with symbolism. This marks the start of a new chapter in the country: a new vision and hope for the future. This **day is about communicating to the public**, the international community and coalition partners.

Inauguration day also presents risks. In the new leader's first address to the nation, it is important to **strike the right tone of hope, inclusion, reconciliation and action**. The leaders should work with trusted advisors and even the director of the peacekeeping forces to ensure the inaugural speech does not unintentionally create or raise tensions.

If there is no formal swearing-in event, the new leader should address the public directly by holding a press conference on the first day in office. Remarks should, among other things:

- ◆ Lay out the agenda of the interim administration;
- ◆ Be clear about immediate staffing plans, security operations and the roles and responsibilities among the national government, local government and international peacekeeping forces;
- ◆ Set realistic expectations and explain how the public can be a part of peacebuilding, a future constitutional assembly and rebuilding efforts; and
- ◆ Outline "quick wins" that the administration will seek to address in the first months in office.

Moving into the official residence(s) and executive offices

In addition to the ceremonial aspects, there are a number of practical considerations for a new leader's first day. They must move into an official residence, swear in cabinet members, and sign the first executive orders. Depending on the peace accord, the new leader may also assume control of the nation's armed forces.

Executive office staff will move into their offices or temporary quarters, assess their equipment and communications needs, and outline processes for intra-office and inter-office communication, coordination and document retention. Office assets will be tracked by either a logistics team, office manager or division of general services. These staff will likely be **career civil servants** with previous government experience. They are part of the continuity needed for smooth transitions. In addition to tracking and assigning office furniture, equipment and supplies, designated staff can help identify procurement mechanisms and needs.



Opposition candidate and former military junta leader Julius Maada Bio takes his oath as Sierra Leone's president in Freetown, Sierra Leone, April 4, 2018.

Photo credit: Olivia Acland, Reuters/Alamy Stock Photo



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It is likely that during the conflict, electrical grids, government buildings, telecommunications and other infrastructure were damaged or destroyed. Therefore, **it may be necessary to procure and furnish a new or temporary office building**. When looking for a new executive office, it is important to consider capacity for necessary electrical, internet, and telecommunications capacities given the volume of staff. It should also be sufficiently secure to **protect key officials and allow for visitor screening and validation** of staff badges. It is important to vet all potential engineers, contractors, and real estate agents to reduce incompetencies, corruption and exposure to peace spoilers.

A team made up of people familiar with both logistics and the proposed structure of the executive office should spearhead setting up the new office before the executive officially takes office. This team should be given a **realistic budget**, factoring in current budget capacity, international assistance and whether the new offices will be temporary or permanent.

An operations team, or at least an office manager, should be responsible for the management of the executive office, including assigning office spaces. The team will be on call when office supplies are low, the phones or internet are not working, and if there are issues with the building itself, such as plumbing or electrical issues.

Staffing

Especially when a country is transitioning from an authoritarian to a democratic government, the structure of the executive office is likely to change. Greater **transparency and communication** must be goals of a new administration, requiring clarity of staff roles' reporting structures, decision-making authority and executive access. An easy-to-read organizational chart should be created and shared with all executive offices, ministries and agencies.

When developing staff descriptions, it is important to define what role the head of government will play in the management of the executive office, who will report directly to the head of government and if there will be an administrative team. Staff members should not be hired solely because of loyalty or role in the conflict. They should have the requisite skills, be open to collaboration, not be spoilers of peace and ideally represent ethnic and gender diversity.

Chief of staff (and/or senior advisors)

The chief of staff is often one of the head of government's closest advisors. The chief of staff typically oversees day-to-day operations and acts as a ballast to the executive, giving guidance and keeping the executive on track to meet stated goals. The chief of staff will often select key executive staff and supervise them, manage who has access to the head of government, and advise the head of government on key issues. In addition, the chief of staff will monitor the information flow to the head of government, including ensuring necessary information is presented. While they may be a gatekeeper, the chief of staff should not be the only person advising or providing information to the head of government. The chief of staff role, in some ways, is to provide a buffer so that the head of government does not make uninformed, biased or corrupt decisions. A chief of staff should have management skills, be able to think strategically, represent the views of the executive and ensure fairness in the executive office. Senior advisors usually have specific issues and topics that they advise the head of government on, while a chief of staff typically acts as the closest advisor on a broader range of topics. However, if a chief of staff is not chosen, senior advisors will take over the chief of staff's roles, helping the head of government manage the office, messaging and intergovernmental relations, as well as helping implement their strategy.



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Communications director and press secretary (will be discussed in detail in later sections)

Cabinet secretary: The cabinet secretary manages the flow of information between the executive and the ministries. Frequently this role is held by a career civil servant who understands how the government used to operate and what reforms are being made. Thus, the cabinet secretary can establish the best rules and procedures for how information is received and processed.

Policy leads: A policy lead is not the ultimate subject matter expert. Instead, a policy lead works with a team to learn from subject matter experts to develop ideas that support the strategy and goals of the interim government and peace accords. A policy lead must be able to provide clear, concise and creative policy proposals for the head of government. The lead will also be in charge of selecting their team. All team members should be vetted thoroughly for their qualification and should reflect the diversity of the country. Team members should feel comfortable working collaboratively and challenging assumptions. Importantly, even if team members did not support the head of government during the conflict, they will support the agreed-upon peace accord, vision of the interim executive and strategy of the new administration.

Legal affairs: A legal advisor is imperative for a post-conflict transition. The legal advisor and the team of lawyers in the office of the legal advisor ensure that all aspects of the transition and new administration adhere to peace treaties, the nation's laws, international law, and interim policies. Moving forward, the legal advisor will help resolve legal disputes, provide guidance on all legal issues and promote consistency in legislation and administrative matters. Critical to the post-conflict context, a legal advisor will also warn of conflicts of interest, current or potential violations of human and civil rights, and corruption. The office of the legal advisor's team should be staffed with lawyers familiar with constitutional law, international law and contract law.

Financial advisor: The financial advisor will help the interim executive understand the financial needs of the new government and what resources are available and may potentially lead on all fiscal matters. In this case, the financial advisor is akin to the chief financial officer of the nation and may also be the finance minister. The financial advisor will engage not only with their ministry of finance, but also with donor governments, international financial institutions and the legislative branch.

Scheduler: The scheduler maintains the head of government's official schedule and handles their travel plans. In this sense, they are a liaison among the executive, executive staff, the cabinet, the legislative branch and the public. A scheduler's office is also physically located near the head of government's office, allowing a scheduler to act as a gatekeeper. The scheduler helps the executive balance their time among administrative, travel, policy and family obligations. To this end, schedulers are constantly coordinating with the head of government and updating the daily, weekly, and quarterly calendars. The scheduler is a higher-level position than the title implies. The scheduler ensures priorities and timelines are met, and therefore, they must protect the time of the head of government. More people will want more time with the executive than is possible. The scheduler determines not only who meets with the head of government, but also how long that meeting lasts and who else will attend. The person in this role should know protocols and the executive's preferences for whom to invite into meetings, when to interrupt, and how long to engage particular people, ministries or delegations.

Because they are privy to sensitive information and engage with leaders from foreign governments, multilateral organizations and international agencies, the scheduler should be vetted thoroughly.



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Protocol officer: The chief protocol officer advises the head of government and administration personnel on diplomatic protocol; arranges detailed itineraries when foreign dignitaries visit; plans diplomatic ceremonies; and engages with the protocol officers of visiting dignitaries, ambassadors and peacekeeping missions. To this end, the chief protocol officer also may be tasked with overseeing the security arrangements for the executive and all attendees at events.

Executive assistant: The executive assistant is a direct aid to the head of government. The executive assistant is like a high-level project manager for the executive office, responsible for ensuring all staff know their tasks, stay on schedule and have any potential gaps or needs addressed to meet targets and complete tasks. An executive assistant also frequently acts as the official notetaker for important meetings between the head of government and senior officials or delegations. This is another position that requires trust, good judgment and a thorough vetting of any candidate.

Internal coordination and workflow

◆ *Chain of command*

Effective management depends upon a clear understanding of roles and responsibilities, as well as accountability policies. It is critical to have **robust internal coordination**, as well as coordination on security and border issues with peacekeeping missions and, if possible, neighboring countries to maintain peace and ensure effective governance for the new leader and government from day one.

Most countries, including those in post-conflict contexts, follow a similar chain of command.

The head of government will have final decision-making and potentially veto authority. The head of government is also the commander of the armed forces, the face of foreign policy and the signatory to legislation. They may or may not also have the authority to issue executive orders that do not require the legislature's approval. However, there may be some restrictions to these powers for an interim head of government that will be lifted after a free and fair election.



Senegalese Prime Minister Aminata Touré and former Prime Minister Abdul Mbaye meet together.

Photo credit: Getty Images



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The head of government may have a deputy, who is ready to assume office if something happens to the head of government or to carry out special projects and policy initiatives. Cabinet ministers are responsible for their specific ministries, even if the decision for a particular action came from the head of government or from the legislative branch. Under the cabinet ministers, the **hierarchy follows along the lines of deputy minister, then undersecretary and finally assistant secretary**. An **easy-to-read chart showing the chain of command should be shared with all executive offices, ministries and agencies**. There should also be an office manual with job descriptions, personnel rosters, contact information and **office policies and procedures**. These policies and procedures will need to be developed or updated, depending on the form and policies of the previous regime. These rules will include information on how to handle crisis situations — and the chain of command for specific actions during those crises — financial accountability at all levels of government, hiring processes, and potentially diversity and inclusion training, as there are likely to be lingering tensions. For example, career civil servants from the previous regime might be hostile to incorporating people from traditionally underrepresented groups. In addition to these tensions, there may be intra-agency or intra-ministerial tensions as different offices vie for authority or resources or authority over the design and/or implementation of a project. This competition may escalate tensions if the people from the competing offices represent different sides from the conflict.

◆ *Staff meetings*

During an interim government, the executive will want to meet several times a week with their senior leadership team to share vital information, ensure external messaging is aligned, and coordinate priorities for the executive, the cabinet and the security forces. In addition, there should be **regular weekly executive staff meetings to keep all staff up to date** on what needs to be done in the immediate medium- and long-term. During these meetings, staff should feel comfortable to share their concerns and projects to see if there are any opportunities for intra-office support or creative solutions. That said, meetings should keep to a fairly tight agenda to ensure that what needs to be covered is within a reasonable amount of time. That agenda should include a debriefing of the previous week's events, activities and progress/setbacks; a briefing on the current week's events and activities; a review of the calendar; assigning duties and responsibilities for upcoming activities; and time for discussion. Ensure that staff meetings **include minutes** that are disseminated and archived for knowledge management purposes.

Strategic planning

A strategic plan is a roadmap. A well-developed strategic plan will identify key issues, establish priorities, outline clear actions, and indicate who is responsible for those actions and what the process is for decision-making. Post-conflict strategic plans will involve not just the executive office, but also ministries and other offices. Comprehensive strategic plans help the head of government **create and focus on an agenda for their time in office** rather than allowing outside actors to hijack and set a different, competing agenda. Strategic planning and agenda-setting are critical in a post-conflict context when basic security is on the line. That being said, there will be some commitments from peace accords and political settlements that will impact both the agenda and budget.

Strategic planning is not a one-time, one-stop process. It can and should be used to lay out a vision for the country and priorities for a new administration. A strategic planning process will help **establish how to achieve those goals**. Each ministry will also have their own strategic planning process to determine their structure, goals and policy priorities in line with those of the national administration.



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There are several steps to creating a strategic plan:

- ◆ Identify key issues facing the nation
- ◆ Establish goals and objectives for addressing those key issues
- ◆ Determine how to prioritize each goal and objective based on public needs and the specifics of the peace accord, and outline top-level actions with achievable goals (note: refer to section on quick wins versus long-term goals)
- ◆ Outline which ministry/who will be responsible for each action and set realistic timelines
- ◆ Determine barriers to achieving goals, including any historical grievances and agreements in the peace accord
- ◆ Determine what resources will be needed and how to close any funding or capacity gaps
- ◆ Outline monitoring and evaluation measures, including realistic performance indicators to track progress

Because of the pressures on a post-conflict interim government, the strategic planning process should be carried out with some expediency. A timetable for the process should be agreed upon by all parties and adhered to. Each ministry and top-level office or agency should not just be present, but should fully participate in the process by providing their own inputs in relation to their ministries or offices. There should be time to discuss prioritization within these inputs and vis-à-vis the overall national priorities. A methodology should be used to help prioritize activities.

The **national budget and overall economic growth will shape strategic planning**. Economic resources may not be plentiful following a protracted conflict, and inflation is also possible. In the strategic planning process, it is imperative to prioritize early interventions to control inflation and boost employment to help stabilize the economy. Donor aid can provide budgetary support, but this should be seen as merely short-term assistance and not a long-term solution to balance the budget. As much as possible, it is important for the government to take ownership of international assistance and aid. This ensures that the government itself is driving assistance needs and can ensure the sustainability of future transition processes and mechanics. Moreover, while massive privatization of any government-owned enterprises may be a sound economic decision in the long-run, this step should wait until the government has the capacity and resources (human, financial and physical) to plan and implement this process.

The process of developing the strategic plan brings together several key players in the interim government and helps unify this coalition around common priorities. However, because of the post-conflict context, this unity may be difficult to achieve. To help foster more productive and effective collaboration, there should be rules throughout the strategic planning process around **respect and inclusion**. In addition, as there may be multiple competing agendas and leftover tensions from the conflict, a dispute resolution mechanism should be agreed upon at the start of strategic planning. The mechanism should be transparent and not rely upon the traditions of only one ethnic or religious group. Consider working with an outside mediation or strategic planning expert if the process is expected to be highly contentious.

Once approved, the strategic plan should be shared with all ministries, offices and agencies in the government, as well as with the legislature, peacekeeping authority and the public. The head of government should summarize the top-level plan in a press conference or national address. The final strategic planning document should also be stored on a government database, with availability restricted to government officials or open to the public.



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Sudanese Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok addresses a press conference at the Khartoum airport upon return from Washington, D.C., December 8, 2019.

Photo credit: Xinhua/Alamy Stock Photo

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION-SHARING

Rule of Law Enabling Government

The executive office's communications capacity is critical in the first days of a new government. This office can promote coherence in the government's messaging, help dispel rumors that could reignite lingering tensions into a conflict and promote the "quick wins" of the new administration. This office can also act as another feedback loop for the media and public to voice concerns. This means that the office should both serve as a place where officials communicate externally for public awareness on government affairs, and as a portal for citizens to contact the government to air priorities and receive services.

There may be long-standing fears about free speech in a post-conflict country where officials may have used hate speech and other inflammatory forms of rhetoric. There may be the temptation to heavily censor not only media outlets, but also what information is shared with the media and the public. While there should be protections against hate speech, and there may be legitimate security reasons not to share some information (e.g., troop movements or highly sensitive intelligence), citizen trust is best earned through openness and transparency.



The public sphere is a conceptual visualization of communication processes in a society – its structure and shape will depend largely on the political system and conditions in place

Source: *The Missing Link: Fostering Positive Citizen-State Relations in Post-Conflict Environments. The World Bank (2008)*



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Transparent, representative communications are critical to effective leadership transitions, as they set the stage for a new leader to gain trust by the citizenry in their work toward reform. **A new government should communicate to all citizens**, use inclusive language and translate/offer interpretation of any official communications into all local languages. As many post-conflict countries will have suffered damage to electrical grids, executive branch buildings and telecommunications infrastructure, it will be necessary to assess, rebuild or improve information systems, including internet connections and office equipment. There may also be a paper-based system that will need to be upgraded to a digital-based system of record keeping. This may require staff training, as well as extensive IT support.

A note on disinformation:

Disinformation is a growing global phenomenon in which aggressors intentionally insert false information into the national discourse sphere in order to persuade or sway individuals on a specific issue of interest. Disinformation is not to be confused with the process of basic democratic discourse, in which the media and/or citizens engage in dialogue that may or may not be in favor of a leader's views and policies. Disinformation is intentionally false, whereas disagreement is an important part of the democratic process.

Staffing

A government's **press officials advocate for the administration's position**, explain and clarify policies and actions, and correct erroneous or misleading information. They are official spokespersons, speechwriters, and liaisons with media organizations, connecting top officials with reporters.

Communications director

Communications directors are senior aides to the head of government. They are communications professionals who can help a head of government and a new administration hone internal and external messaging. The communications director guides the long-term communications strategy for an administration, including writing speeches or reviewing speeches and their messages. They may also track public opinion and create public information campaigns. Often, the communications director, and not the press secretary, will travel with the head of government on official business. Some governments have only one person who acts as both the communications director and the press secretary.



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Press secretary

The press secretary handles day-to-day press relations, including press briefings, press releases, and responding to media inquiries. The press secretary acts as the official spokesperson for the government. This person should be professional and calm, have a great memory, be committed to a free press and freedom of speech and not appear to be favoring one group, political party or media outlet. They need to handle quickly changing environments with multiple interruptions. Also important is their ability and willingness to work with the press office of the peacekeeping force, as they will be communicating updates on the peacekeeping process, as well as how the police and external intervention forces impact citizen's daily lives. This may require a fluency in an official UN language.

It is important that the executive and the executive office have a relationship with their press secretary that is open and honest. The press secretary is the primary conduit for the head of government to communicate their message. For their part, the head of government needs to be clear about their objectives, goals and potential stumbling blocks to meeting those goals so that the press secretary and their office can best express these to the press. The press secretary, in their role as spokesperson, acts as a translator of information from the government to the public via news organizations, as well as a feedback loop from the press to government officials.

To this end, they advise government officials, particularly the head of government, on potential media reactions to proposed policies. It also means that a press secretary should be able to interrupt the executive if pressing news warrants, as it is better to be responsive to events than have a delayed reaction, particularly if security is at stake. Therefore, the press secretary needs to have unfettered access in order to share critical information with the executive and to communicate to the press and public the executive's agenda/views/reactions/actions, particularly on critical events or emergencies.

A press secretary also acts as a liaison with the press offices of ministries and other government agencies. When telecommunications infrastructure allows, daily conference calls with the press counterparts at the ministry of defense and other security-related ministries/offices are critical. Daily conference calls may also be needed with counterparts at other ministries, particularly if there is an emergency, e.g., daily calls with the ministry of health's press secretary to go over COVID-19 developments, actions and messaging.



Liberia's then president-elect George Weah (L) shakes hands with the country's outgoing President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf on the eve of Weah's inauguration. Monrovia, Liberia, January 21, 2018.

Photo credit: Getty Images



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Press shop

A press office, or “press shop,” assists the press secretary. Press office staff respond to all requests for information from credentialed news organizations and set up interviews with government officials. This office will also plan and manage media campaigns to support a government activity or agenda item. Staff will prepare press releases and other information materials for the press and public (including social media posts). They will monitor the news, noting trends and developments. This office is also often in charge of issuing press credentials.

It may be helpful to develop a code of ethics²⁹ for all members of an administration’s press team. All press officers, particularly designated spokespersons, should be professional, value accuracy and truth, and believe they are ultimately accountable to the citizens of their country. No press officer should have conflicting or competing interests. There should be a process of disclosure of possible conflicts of interest before a person begins to work in the office (often this is a simple form created with a legislative legal team). In addition, press officers should refrain from personal social media use, as all press officers — indeed all government officials — are representatives of the government.

Usually the press office resembles a newsroom with an open floor plan to facilitate quick responses and information-sharing. If there are enough press officers, there may be some division of labor based on expertise, such as economics or defense, or based on the medium, such as television, radio, print or social media.

The press secretary should hold daily morning meetings with press officers and the executive to ensure that everyone is on-message and aware of any crises, criticisms, or overnight events. Agreed-upon messaging should be coordinated and shared with relevant ministries or agencies.

Journalists will likely ask questions beyond the topics on the agenda during press briefings and press conferences. This is the nature of freedom of the press. While staff can respond that they will provide additional information at a later time, it is important to maintain an open relationship with members of the press and be responsive.

Press and other government officials can establish ground rules with journalists by reaching an agreement in advance that certain information is “off the record,” “for background only,” or embargoed until a certain date and time. The parameters of the interview cannot be changed afterwards, so it is important to avoid speaking about issues that should remain out of the news.

“On the record” means that a person may be quoted and named. “On background” means an official’s remarks may be quoted (or paraphrased), but they are not named individually nor by their title. “On deep background” means the official cannot be identified or quoted at all, including not as an “unnamed source.” However, the information given may be used in the reporting (e.g., “it has been learned that...”). “Off the record” means that nothing said to the reporter may be used and is only to inform the reporter of something.

Talking to journalists “on the record” is the best option for getting out information about policies, priorities, responses to emergencies, and general messaging. As a relationship with and trust in a reporter develops, there may be more comfort with sharing background information to explain more complex subjects without having to risk being taken out of context. “Off the record” conversations or “background” briefings are especially effective in helping clarify a sensitive issue for a journalist who may misunderstand something because of the complexity of the topic.

Set the ground rules before an interview begins (i.e., whether everything will be “on the record,” “off the record,” or “background”). Do not try to establish these rules after an interview, as it will be too late and the journalist may report whatever was said.



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Press corps

The press corps consists of reporters from domestic and international news organizations assigned and credentialed to cover the national government. They are present at the daily press briefings, special press briefings and special functions open to media, including out-of-town events. Executive office press credentials generally mean these reporters and technicians (such as camera people) can enter the part of the executive office reserved for the press and press briefings. If there are enough resources, some governments establish a room within the executive office or nearby specifically for members of the press corps with “hard” passes, meaning they have obtained the necessary press credentials.

Typically, the press corps is credentialed through the press office, in conjunction with applicable journalists’ unions, news associations or local police. General press credentials are offered to full-time staff and freelance reporters from radio, television, print and online news organizations. Executive office press credentials, on the other hand, require additional scrutiny. Journalists (and technicians) will fill out a form and demonstrate that they will be covering the head of government frequently, requiring a hard pass that allows them to enter the executive office. The forms for a hard press pass will usually require a letter from the employer (or most frequent news organizations a freelancer works with) and may require proof of citizenship. International media outlets may also be required to have letters from their embassies attesting to their news organization’s legitimacy. When possible, background checks are done to ensure a reporter is not a security threat. **Press credentialing** ensures verified members of the media are provided access to report on relevant information. This is especially important for the purpose of enabling transparent and open government information-sharing and communications. For this reason, press credentialing should not be used to discriminate against media outlets or to censor out media outlets that may not agree with the executive and their policies. In fact, press credentialing can offer a useful assurance of the transparent and truthful reporting of information directly from government sources.

Communications strategic planning

From the first day in office, an interim government should **have a communications plan with clear messaging to reflect the new administration’s strategy and goals**. Even if a strategic plan is not yet available, there should be a basic understanding of the overarching goals of the head of state, as well as requirements in the peace accords. The communications director and press office staff should work closely with the executive team, particularly the head of government, to **hone in on immediate goals and core messaging**, while waiting for a longer- or medium-term strategy to be developed in conjunction with ministries and peacekeepers.

Effective communications capacity requires frequent, frank meetings among staff in the press office, the communications director and the head of government. These will also require research and probably engagement with key ministries and peacekeeping operations to better understand timelines, feasibilities, budgets, roles and responsibilities for achieving the long-term goals.

Communications staff will distill the administration’s governing vision into a limited number of key points and objectives, and then develop messages around those key points. Too many — such as more than five points — might cloud the message and confuse the public. Each point should explain the desired goal, what impact it will have — budgetary and otherwise — and the timeline for activities and programs required to meet each goal. *When refining messaging, it helps to think like an editor — how would an editor edit this story and write the headline?* This frame of reference can help clarify or re-prioritize a particular message.



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Next, the communications team will want to assess how its strategy is viewed within the new government, by key members of the international community and by populations most impacted by the recent conflict. It is likely there may be some skepticism and developing proactive talking points may help ease any concerns. It is also helpful to adapt talking points to specific audiences, emphasizing elements that are likely to resonate or preemptively address concerns.

Once a communications plan is in place, the communications team and press shop will work to disseminate messaging through speeches, public awareness campaigns and the media. The plan should include a **messaging schedule** with clear roles and responsibilities. It is also important to specify approval processes in advance to control what is released to the public and when. Then develop a plan for getting these messages out — through executive speeches, public messaging campaigns and media outreach. Assign tasks to members of the press office (such as writing press releases and arranging interviews), and work out a schedule to achieve those tasks, a clear chain of approval for messages and methods for communication.

- ◆ **Clear, consistent messaging is key to building awareness and acceptance:** It is important to reinforce messages in public events, media briefings, interviews and even when proposing and signing legislation, tailoring them to specific audiences in each event. Ideally, the press secretary develops a calendar with key national events and holidays, the legislative calendar and other opportunities for reinforcing this messaging; however, not all communications teams will have this luxury in a post-conflict environment.
- ◆ **Communications workflow:** Communications staff should coordinate all messaging with executive office staff, relevant ministries and agencies and, when applicable, the press office of the peacekeeping mission to make sure there is no conflicting information being shared with the public. In addition to helping keep the government's message on track, coordinated messaging helps build support for government activities, programs, and measures. It also helps demonstrate unity within a new government, and this can bolster trust in a nascent government and the peace process itself.
- ◆ **Identify audience and modes of communication:** The communications team will identify local, national and international news organizations and key editors/reporters to share the new government's agenda and progress. In addition to traditional news outlets, the new government should reach out to community leaders, unions, NGO, and other locally trusted sources to make sure messaging is heard by different communities. If there is more than one official or widely used language, the communications team should carefully translate all materials and make interpretation widely available for public remarks. The communications team should also look to match the method of communication to specific audiences. For example, educated youth may be active on social media, while those with low literacy may listen to the radio. In fact, radio broadcasters may be the primary source of official information. If literacy rates are low, the team can even look at adapting written documents into pictograms. There is more to public messaging than just the words and text. When the new government is planning a public event, the visuals — the location, attire, or prominent audience members — are just as important. These elements should enhance, not distract from the message or unintentionally stoke existing tensions.
- ◆ **Working with the press:** A good rule of thumb is to never intentionally lie to the press. While any administration will want to “spin” current events, it is important to avoid propaganda and misinformation out of respect for press freedom — a core democratic value. That said, mistakes happen. If something is inadvertently misrepresented or incorrectly stated by a government official, the press office should work to issue a correction as soon as possible. In that same vein, if a news outlet prints or airs false information about the administration, a press officer should be tasked with asking for a correction from that outlet. It is important to understand, however, that negative coverage is inevitable and not the same as coverage that is incorrect. Prior to press briefings, the press office should distribute or make available press releases, background information on policies, media advisories of upcoming events and summaries of key points. Circulating these materials helps prevent misrepresentation or misquoting by a reporter and



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restates the administration's key points. The press secretary and communications director may provide basic media training for the head of government and top officials who will be the main faces of the new administration. This training will help officials keep calm and stay on point in public settings and when answering reporters' questions, particularly if they are not used to a free, uncensored press. Frequently, press staff will conduct mock interviews with officials, so they can learn techniques to stay on message and defuse tensions.

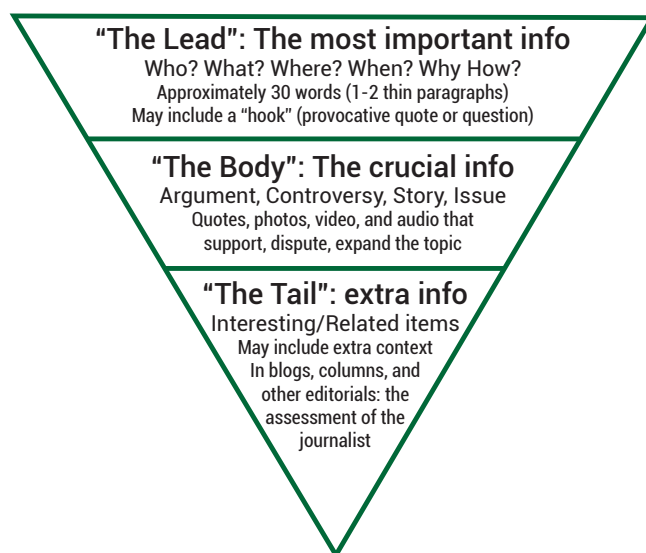
Frequent press briefings and truthful press releases are likely to help build confidence in a new administration by keeping the public informed on the transition to democracy.

Developing press materials

Frequent press briefings and truthful press releases are likely to help build confidence in a new administration by keeping the public informed on the transition to democracy.

Press releases highlight a program, measure, event or strategy launched for the media. Typically, press releases describe the new initiative and explain why it is being undertaken. While these take on a variety of formats, press releases frequently quote the government point person to make a compelling public case or address anything that may be controversial. If the new initiative is expected to raise eyebrows, the press team may also draft supplemental materials to the release, including responsive talking points for any press briefings or interviews.

Press releases, like a news article, are written in what is called an "inverted pyramid style," with the most important information in the first paragraph (the "lead"), and subsequent paragraphs containing progressively less important information.



Source: Inverted pyramid in comprehensive form" by Christopher Schwartz is licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0



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Critical considerations for press releases include the following:

- ◆ A press release should explain what is happening, why it matters and what the impact will be
- ◆ Information should be conveyed in no more than one page of text, in short sentences without abbreviations or government jargon
- ◆ Quotes from key officials are usually included in the second or third paragraph
- ◆ Typically, the release is dated, has a point of contact in the press office and includes a headline and instructions about when to release
- ◆ Because a press release is an official government communication, it is important to release it in all relevant languages

As mentioned, another essential duty of the press office is to develop talking points for top officials (including the head of government) before interviews, public events, press briefings or meetings with foreign delegations. These talking points should have supporting information, such as examples or anecdotes, that help express the point. Talking points should be concise and focused not only on the policy or issue, but also on the positive impact the administration is making. Ideally, talking points also express empathy and inclusion, demonstrating how administration policies or programs are uniting the country, righting past wrongs and/or advancing the stabilization and peace process.

Press conferences

In a press briefing, the press secretary will answer questions from the press corps, as opposed to a press conference, where a government official presents a policy, program or change in strategy before taking questions from the media. An official may choose to hold a press conference to more directly communicate a particular direction, policy or strategy, or to respond to a crisis. **Press conferences are useful when there is a need to communicate something positive or show how quickly the government is responding to a crisis.** However, officials should be prepared to answer a wide range of questions. For this and other reasons, press conferences may not always be the best public communications option.

There is pressure on new administrations, particularly following a violent conflict, to hold regular press conferences and daily press briefings to assure the public, all signatories to the peace accords and the international community that progress toward peace and stability is being made. Frequent press conferences — perhaps once a month — during the interim administration help build transparency and trust by keeping the public informed on progress and challenges during the transition. Before scheduling a press conference, decide if a press conference is the most effective way to convey a message to the targeted audience. In some cases, a press release or well-placed interview may be better.

Before any press conference, **the press office should help the government official shape a short opening statement.** Press officers should also develop brief talking

Frequent press conferences — perhaps once a month — during the interim administration help build transparency and trust by keeping the public informed on progress and challenges during the transition.



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points and anticipate possible questions and answers. To help the government official feel more comfortable and better prepared, press staff may hold a mock press conference in advance. This trial run is also an opportunity to test out responses and revise as needed.

When preparing for the press conference, it is important to **consider the visuals** — where would be the best location to reinforce the messaging? For example, if a minister or the head of government is announcing a health care policy, then perhaps the official could hold the press conference at a rural health clinic that was impacted by the conflict and will be directly benefited by the administration's policy.

In the lead-up, the press office will prepare all materials and handle necessary logistics. A location will be chosen to reinforce messaging, and designated press staff will set up microphones, chairs and anything else required in advance. Staff will also make sure that press, including television and radio broadcasters, have the infrastructure they need for live or taped coverage.

Press staff will issue a **media advisory** in advance of a press conference to give reporters and other desired attendees — local officials, community leaders, civil society organizations — adequate notice. If the head of government is participating, press staff may want to restrict access or require the press to register in advance to allow for **security screening**. Security considerations should not be used as a pretext to punish outlets that have run unfavorable stories.

After reading a pre-prepared statement, the government official should take questions from the press. A press officer may intervene in this process to indicate if time is running short and when the press conference is concluded. **Staff should also keep track of unanswered questions and respond promptly after the fact.** Press staff should also tape and transcribe the government official's statement and answers and make these publicly available.

Public meetings

Public meetings are a way to show both the public and the international community the direction of a new government. These meetings allow the head of government to directly communicate with and hear from the people most affected by policies and programs. However, they pose real security challenges, requiring careful cost-benefit analysis in advance. Preparation and logistics for public meetings are similar to press conferences. **Logistics and substance should be planned thoroughly in advance, and the government official should be well-prepared.**

Frequently, government officials will participate in events hosted by non-governmental organizations. In these circumstances, it is important for staff to collaborate closely with organizers to shape the event marketing, program, guest list and press materials. Staff should have final approval of all public communications and other details related to the government official's participation. As with press conferences, it is important that staff arrive at the event location before the event starts to alert the official, their security team, and the press secretary/communications director to any technical impediments or unexpected issues, such as program changes, protestors or potential threats.

Officials attending or presiding over public engagements should have some training from the press office to best represent the government. This **training** should include:

- ◆ Learning how to sit and stand in public to look engaged and energized, even when in a large room
- ◆ Maintaining eye contact while speaking directly with someone, especially during an interview
- ◆ Dressing appropriately for the circumstance
- ◆ Addressing nervous tics or habits
- ◆ Using natural hand gestures to appear more at ease



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Open government and two-way feedback

Government openness mechanisms — such as government websites, press conferences, leadership townhalls, public events and information-sharing technologies — provide citizens with accessible means for gathering and sharing information with their elected officials. Commitments to providing **government openness and transparent information-sharing strengthen public trust and confidence in institutions**, and they advance promises for accountability and transparency of government resources and, ultimately, service delivery. Two-way feedback allows the government to provide information externally to the public, and for the public to have opportunities to share their feedback and priorities in return. Whether this is done through live or public forums, such as a press conference, or through online information-sharing channels that report information on policy plans and implementation, such mechanisms enhance a leader's visibility to the public, especially as the leader works to codify their priorities and vision in their first few months in office. To develop commitments to government openness and transparency, leaders can work with global networks, such as the Open Government Partnership (OGP)³⁰, which supports governments in developing national commitments to openness across all levels.

CRISIS MANAGEMENT

Crises are not always security-related, even in a post-conflict country. **A crisis is any situation that happens suddenly, disrupts normal activities, and demands an immediate response.** A crisis can be a natural disaster, a resurgence of violence, a pandemic or simply a scandal involving a top official. An emergency is always a crisis, but a crisis is not always an emergency (e.g., a scandal). However, an emergency can become a crisis if not handled well, particularly if a party to the conflict or previously targeted group feels like their concerns have been disregarded or that they are being disadvantaged. Likewise, seemingly mundane issues can also become crises if not handled appropriately, especially through a lack of coordination in an executive's response.

Crises can occur at any time — before, during or after — a leader transitions to office. That is why it is critical for leaders and their teams to **be ready to respond quickly and effectively** in the event a situation arises. Preparing a crisis communications plan in advance will help the administration focus on resolving the crisis without exacerbating any insecurity or fear. This level of preparedness is particularly crucial in a post-conflict environment when people will already feel on edge or traumatized. A crisis may highlight dysfunction and discrimination, or it can demonstrate a new government's strength, foresight and inclusion.

A crisis management plan identifies possible disasters and crises; and the processes, actions and resources needed to respond, stabilize the situation and ensure continuity in government functions. A post-conflict management plan should include actions that ensure marginalized populations or populations that were previously targeted are properly informed, and responses take their languages, customs and needs into consideration.

Key steps in the crisis management process

Step 1. Form the crisis response team: A crisis response team should include the head of government, key government ministers, a crisis response manager, a crisis communications manager, security leads and the communications teams of relevant ministries/agencies. Depending on the nature of the crisis, the team may also include top officials/spokespersons of peacekeeping operations.

A crisis may highlight dysfunction and discrimination, or it can demonstrate a new government's strength, foresight, and inclusion.



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Crisis response team:

- ◆ Head of government
- ◆ Chief of staff
- ◆ Key government ministers
- ◆ Crisis response manager
- ◆ Crisis communications manager (head of the government's emergency management body)
- ◆ Security leads
- ◆ Communications teams of relevant ministries

Step 2. Choose a crisis response manager: Typically, the crisis response manager is the head of the government emergency management administration or emergency services division. They will need the support of senior officials in order to effectively implement the crisis management plan, organize the crisis response team, assess the crisis, monitor and mitigate against risks, evaluate options, build a response strategy and provide regular updates.

The crisis response manager should choose and train a crisis communications manager. While the press secretary may fill this role, it could also be someone else with a communications or emergency management background. In a crisis, it is important for the crisis communications manager to designate an official spokesperson and make clear to ministry staff how to handle press inquiries and who can and cannot speak on the record. While each ministry may have its own crisis management team, the crisis communications manager should ensure their efforts are coordinated.

Step 3. Establish a coordination plan for crisis response: Coordination is key to effective crisis management. All government stakeholders need to understand their roles and responsibilities in a given crisis. It is important that there is a clear chain of command within the government and the communications team when a crisis hits. At the most basic level, there should be a list with contact information for everyone in the chain that is shared with all members. Depending on the kind of crisis and the security protocols in place, the crisis team may also have two-way radio handles that should be added to contact information. In addition, each member of the team should have a thorough understanding of what is expected of them, whom they report to and who has final decision-making authority. To prepare and cement these ideas, a new government should plan drills for the crises most likely to occur, such as a natural disaster or pandemic.

Step 4. Monitor risks, impacts and ongoing events: The crisis communications team will monitor potential hot-button issues and trends to anticipate potential crises before they arise. The team should proactively develop communications strategies for things they think are most likely to realistically develop into a crisis. To help, the crisis communications manager may be in frequent contact with the government emergency management administration or emergency services division to assess ongoing events related to the particular crisis.

Step 5. Develop messaging for each crisis scenario: An important part of a crisis communications plan is ensuring public messaging is clear and consistent. Depending on the crisis, messaging should calm the public and/or provide practical information about what they should do. Messaging, to the extent that is practicable, should include realistic timelines and set public expectations. Messaging can be shared across multiple mediums to reach as many people as possible and can also be targeted to particularly impacted communities. All public messaging should be available in official and/or commonly used languages.



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Step 6. Establish a crisis focal point: In a crisis, it is sometimes helpful to set up a “command center” or operations center for the team to assemble and make quick, collective decisions. This room should have desks, chairs, phones, electricity or generators, fuel for the generators, enough water for every person who will use the center and adequate security. Depending on the crisis, staff in the operations center may set up a crisis information hotline and website to answer frequently asked questions and provide updates. The hotline and website should be accessible in all official or commonly used languages.

Step 7. When a crisis occurs, activate the crisis communications plan: When the time comes, the crisis communications manager should share messaging information with the chief of staff, the cabinet, any other relevant government agencies/officials and, depending on the nature of the crisis, with the peacekeeping operations. Feedback from these stakeholders will help the crisis communications team refine their messaging.

Effective communications strategies in a crisis

In any crisis context, leadership communications are paramount. Knowing when to communicate and what to say is pivotal to ensuring that the people get timely and accurate information to assuage concerns.

The following are good practices for communicating in a crisis:

- ◆ **Set up a press conference and have the top official, if appropriate, speak directly to the public as soon and as honestly as possible.** Even when the head of government, their administration or a top official in the administration is involved in a crisis, it is best to be transparent and honest. Deception and obfuscation only stoke fears, distrust and rumors.
- ◆ **Share what is known.** All spokespeople and officials should speak calmly and with authority to lay out what actions are being taken. This approach will help assure the public that the administration is handling the situation.
- ◆ **Admit what is not yet known.** As a crisis unfolds, it is normal that a government may not have all of the facts right away. Some responses may take time. Rather than speculating or making false or unrealistic promises, spokespeople should admit that they are gathering facts and more information may be forthcoming.
- ◆ **Include relevant staff in the crisis decision-making process.** Communication is a fundamental component of crisis management. The press secretary and crisis communications team will be better equipped to respond if they are included in meetings and decisions. Communications and policy responses should go hand in hand. In addition, the communications team can also offer insight into the general public’s and media’s perception of the administration’s handling of the crisis, which may help inform government responses.
- ◆ **Continue to gather information as quickly as possible and update the public frequently.** Understanding that situations evolve, the crisis communications team should track outstanding media questions or interview requests, their deadlines and who in the press office will respond.
- ◆ **After the crisis is over, evaluate and improve the crisis management and communications plans.** Everyone involved in the crisis should participate in an honest “lessons learned” exercise after the fact to document what worked well and what could be improved. This reflection will help the response to the next crisis, thereby increasing public trust in the leader and government.



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The UN African Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) works in collaboration with the North Darfur Committee on Women to organize an open day session on the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security in Dar El Salaam, North Darfur. The purpose of the activity was to discuss the progress made in the state with regards to women's issues. The forum, which was attended by 80 participants including government representatives, women leaders and UNAMID officials, identified the possible impact of the resolution on daily life and key areas including protection, women's rights, participation in the peace process, training for midwives and socio-economic empowerment.

Photo credit: By Albert Gonzalez Farran, UNAMID

WORKING WITH INTERNATIONAL ACTORS

Immediately following a cease-fire, and particularly after signing a peace accord, countries usually see a **large influx of international aid** – economic and security – to help stabilize and rebuild the country. New governments can work with the international community to access both financial and peacekeeping assistance to follow through on commitments promised in the peace accord and build trust with the citizenry. However, an interim government must be careful not to rely too heavily upon revenues from international donors. There is a risk that over-reliance on foreign aid undermines domestic ownership of the transition and limits incentives to build or rebuild necessary public institutions.

There are several primary types of assistance flows: humanitarian, constitutional reform and electoral assistance, sustainable employment, economic development, infrastructure, education, natural resource management, security and peacebuilding.

Inevitably, there will be numerous needs following a conflict, particularly an extended conflict over a wide geographical area. For example, countries may require humanitarian aid — the provision of shelter, safe water, food, sanitation, blankets, clothing and healthcare.

Security has been discussed earlier, but not all organizations involved in security reform will provide forces or equipment. Many will work to address the drivers of violent extremism and terrorism, support ongoing peace negotiations or help with DDR incentives.

Some international organizations will focus on strengthening regional trade and financial integration, increasing economic interdependence and financial incentives for peace. Others may focus on reducing corruption and illicit economic activities, diversifying the economy and improving natural resource



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management — particularly when natural resource production makes up a large portion of GDP and competition over those resources was a large factor in the conflict. Some may choose to develop and implement sustainable employment programs and activities, including investing in manufacturing and providing capital goods or livestock.

Other international organizations will focus on civic participation and inclusivity to pave the way for democratic culture. Programs in this vein are likely to support girls' education, leadership training for women and other activities to increase women's political participation and address inequities. Similarly, other organizations may support greater political participation of traditionally excluded groups, including more inclusive and representative local councils and political parties.

Whatever the intervention, international assistance should address immediate humanitarian needs and promote the peace agreements by broadening inclusion, transparency, and accountability.

Key assistance actors

There are many key international assistance actors in post-conflict transitions, including the United Nations, which has been referenced throughout this document. The United Nations has several key agencies dedicated to transitional support, including:

- ◆ The **United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)** is dedicated to saving lives and protecting the rights of refugees, forcibly displaced communities and stateless people. UNHCR will establish refugee and internally displaced persons camps, and they will provide critical emergency assistance such as clean water, sanitation, health care, shelter, blankets and household goods. They also arrange transport and assistance packages for people returning home and develop income-generating projects for those who resettle.³¹
- ◆ The **United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)** works with agencies within the UN (and outside partners) to provide emergency humanitarian assistance to children. In addition, they support early childhood development and quality education for all children; provide health care, water and sanitation, nutrition and immunization interventions; promote child protection programming; and foster gender equality.³²
- ◆ The **United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)** works to eradicate poverty and reduce inequities through sustainable development. Because of its broad mandate, UNDP will likely have a large agenda in-country fostering conditions to spur economic recovery and growth, generating employment and other economic opportunities, especially for women and youth, helping manage natural resources and distributing revenues in a transparent and equitable way.³³
- ◆ The **World Food Programme (WFP)** is focused on ending hunger and increasing food security. It is an important member of the humanitarian team. WFP logistics teams may build or rebuild basic infrastructure, such as bridges and roads, in an effort to reach people dying of thirst and starvation in the wake of a conflict or natural disaster.³⁴
- ◆ The **World Health Organization (WHO)** coordinates responses to health emergencies, which most post-conflict countries have, and promotes health and well-being through technical assistance, setting health standards and guidelines and conducting health assessments.³⁵

There are several primary types of assistance flows: humanitarian, constitutional reform, electoral assistance, sustainable employment, economic development, infrastructure, education, natural resource management, security and peacebuilding.



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Multilateral institutions

The **International Monetary Fund's (IMF)** mission is to secure financial stability; promote global monetary cooperation; and promote employment, trade and sustainable economic growth. The IMF provides loans (such as the Extended Credit Facility,³⁶ the Rapid Credit Facility,³⁷ and the Standby Credit Facility³⁸) that are meant to help member countries tackle balance of payments problems, stabilize their economies and restore sustainable economic growth. The IMF is not a development bank and does not finance projects.

The **World Bank** provides low-interest loans and grants to developing country governments to support programs in education, health, public administration, infrastructure, financial and private sector development (including assets recovery and management), agriculture and natural resource management.³⁹

Regional partners

Regional organizations **foster cooperation, political and economic integration** and sometimes security cooperation within a specific geographic or geopolitical area. Regional organizations often work with multilateral organizations, such as the United Nations. They play key roles in transitional administrations, helping establish security, assisting in peace negotiations, implementing peace agreements and providing technical and/or financial assistance. Regional organizations can help new and transitional administrations with challenges such as fighting terrorist activity and combating illicit flows of weapons and resources, as well as the issues of climate change, migration and economic development. Examples of regional organizations include: **the African Union (AU), the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the Collective Security Organization (CSTO) of the League of Arab States, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the European Union (EU), the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the Organization of American States (OAS), the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and the South African Development Community (SADCC).**

Foreign donor countries

Foreign governments provide a significant amount of direct aid, frequently through an agency such as the **China Development Bank (CDB), the French Development Agency (AFD), Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), the UK's Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office and the US Agency for International Development (USAID).**

These agencies are usually concerned with fostering economic growth and socioeconomic development. Some may also be focused on democratic and justice reforms. There may be tensions between the interests and goals of the interim government and those of a donor government.

International NGOs

In addition to multilateral and government assistance, there is usually an influx of assistance from international NGOs, each with their own mandates and focus. For example, the **International Rescue Committee (IRC)** provides safe water, shelter, health care, and education to refugees and internally displaced people. **Médecins Sans Frontières, or Doctors Without Borders (MSF),**



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The National Democratic Institute, in partnership with the White House Transition Project and others, hosted a two-day international symposium on Effective Transfers of Leadership Power in Montreal, Canada in 2018. The event brought together more than 40 stakeholders, including former leaders and officials, civil service staff and international assistance partners to discuss good practices for smooth transitions globally.

Photo credit: National Democratic Institute.

provides medical assistance to people affected by conflict, epidemics, disasters or exclusion from health care. The **National Democratic Institute (NDI)** supports and strengthens democratic institutions through citizen participation, openness and accountability in government.⁴⁰

Critical considerations in international assistance

Partners must work together and be coordinated

- ◆ In a post-conflict setting, an interim government may find it challenging to manage multiple donors with competing mandates and priorities. To help, a new government may want to establish a task force with regular meetings to make humanitarian and security goals clear. The UN's **Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)** can help coordinate emergency responses. OCHA can also provide needs assessments, develop common strategies, work to build consensus toward common priorities, mobilize funding and resources and monitor progress.⁴¹ OCHA supports the UN-CMCoord,⁴² a framework used to guide military and political actors on how to best support humanitarian interventions.
- ◆ The UN Force Commander and the ministry of defense should be responsible for coordinating security efforts. While most donors are unlikely to have a direct military or police presence on the ground (except perhaps through the peacekeeping mission), they will support security assistance and interventions, such as peacebuilding exercises.
- ◆ Donors may also participate in de-mining activities. The United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) coordinates UN efforts to eliminate landmines and other explosives leftover from the conflict. UNMAS also sits on the Steering Committee on Mine Action, composed of nongovernmental and intergovernmental organizations, such as the **International Committee**



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of the Red Cross.

- ◆ Humanitarian aid can be weaponized by peace spoilers. That is, spoilers can seek to withhold aid or condition aid on particular political outcomes. Thus, there is a critical need in post-conflict settings to have clear distinctions between military and humanitarian objectives and to have agreements between security forces and humanitarian agencies. Humanitarian action should remain neutral, impartial and independent. To ensure these principles are not compromised, there are international principles and guidelines on the use of the military in humanitarian aid and disaster relief.

Assistance must be driven by local needs and priorities

- ◆ For the most effective and impactful interventions, donors should understand the local context, needs and priorities of the new government. To help, the interim government should have its short-term and long-term strategy and agenda publicly available, i.e., on the executive office website, linked in press releases, etc.
- ◆ International organizations should work with local and international experts on the country. More directly, these organizations should ask local governments and community leaders, as well as the interim national government, what their immediate needs, priorities and customs are. This effort will **generate trust** and greater acceptance from local communities. Such engagement will ideally lead to interventions that address needs, lead to greater stability, foster economic development and advance the peace agreements.
- ◆ It is also critical that international organizations not only survey local leaders and citizens, but also promote local participation in their own recovery and development. This participation should be inclusive and not reinforce a status quo that prioritized or disadvantaged one group over another.

The Somali Compact

In 2013, the Somali government established the Somali Compact to effectively coordinate post-conflict international support to the government in its transitional period. The Somali Compact, based on a model from the New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States agreed upon at the High-Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness in Busan, South Korea in 2011, established a model by which foreign donors and partners focused assistance efforts on Somali-led peacebuilding processes and state building. In 2016, a comprehensive review of the Somali Compact reinforced the importance of ensuring locally driven reconstruction processes, and it developed a New Partnership for Somalia, which is centered on reinforcing international assistance initiatives to be driven by Somalis directly. Such agreements reinforce the importance of ensuring international support is founded in a locally-led and directed process to ensure appropriate, viable and long-term national stability.⁴³

“Do no harm” principles

- ◆ “Do no harm” is the minimum standard of practice to prevent and mitigate against the negative impacts of action by international actors on local populations. While humanitarian organizations strive to be neutral, aid itself is not neutral. The kind of aid given and how it is administered can have unintended negative repercussions. By virtue of providing a needed resource such as food, water or shelter, aid distribution can exacerbate tensions over existing resources. Aid itself may also be used as a source of power if it is withheld from one group or another or conditioned.
- ◆ Part of “do no harm” is **understanding local context**, anticipating the impact of an interaction and acting immediately to rectify a negative situation. Done with “do no harm” in mind, aid distribution can be a way to strengthen local capacities and foster inclusion. Several international aid and development organizations are mainstreaming “do no harm” frameworks, offering



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trainings of the principles and conducting assessments of their work vis-à-vis these principles.

Peacekeeping operations

- ◆ In post-conflict countries, a new government should aim to have a strong relationship with the international peacekeeping mission to improve overall stability. The international peacekeeping mandate will likely take a tiered approach, starting with the deployment of security personnel to prevent further conflict. Next, the mission will shift to stabilizing the conflict after a cease-fire (this may include DDR, de-mining and security sector reforms); **creating an environment to help all parties reach a lasting peace accord**; assisting in implementing a peace agreement; helping the interim government transition to a stable, elected government based on democratic ideals; and fostering economic development and good governance (perhaps including electoral assistance). The overall goal of most peacekeeping missions is to foster sustainable peace and socioeconomic development. To achieve this goal, peacekeepers should have the consent of the parties to the peace accord to operate, act impartially and refrain from the use of force except in self-defense or the defense of the agreed mandate.
- ◆ In the case of a UN peacekeeping mission, a head of mission (usually a “special representative” or SRSG) is appointed by and reports to the secretary-general. The SRSG has authority over all the UN activities in the country. They are responsible for ensuring that the UN pursues a coordinated approach with all its agencies and programs, including humanitarian and development operations. The SRSG is also the UN liaison with the host government, donor countries and the broader international community. The SRSG will work with the chief of staff, local government authorities and key ministries. A whole-of-government approach protects the integrity of the mission and avoids concentrating power with one person in the interim government.
- ◆ Regular meetings and coordination structures with the host government can help reduce deterioration of consent. However, host governments need to understand that they cannot act with impunity or violate the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA), the agreement outlining the scope of the peacekeeping operation. SOFA violations are more common when there are widespread human rights abuses and upticks in violence. UN and other international peacekeeping missions can track and report violations, and bilateral or diplomatic responses can be taken. Weekly meetings with the force commander and host government’s military, police and any other security forces can help assuage fears of peacekeeper collaboration with anti-government forces, reduce misunderstandings and allow both sides to share strategic assessments and coordinate efforts.
- ◆ To be successful, it is important that the mission’s and the host government’s priorities are aligned, even when relations between the two are strained. For example, at one point, the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) and the DRC government suspended military operations. Nonetheless, MONUSCO officials understood it was in the Congolese government’s interest to demonstrate progress on the issues of child soldiers and sexual violence within its armed forces.⁴⁴ As a result, MONUSCO mobilized financial and political support for programs and interventions on these two issues.
- ◆ As there will be so many international and domestic actors after a cease-fire, having one goal, one mandate and one strategy is largely impossible. However, to harmonize efforts to the extent practicable, the peacekeeping operation should meet regularly with all major agencies and officials (e.g., diplomatic corps, IMF and World Bank officials, NGOs and contractors working for donor countries). Most humanitarian organizations ought to remain neutral or independent from military or political operations, but it is still important that they receive regular and transparent updates from the international peacekeepers.

A whole-of-government approach protects the integrity of the mission and avoids concentrating power with one person in the interim government.



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CIVIL SOCIETY

After a conflict, civil society may be weak and disorganized or fearful of government. A robust and participatory civil society — citizen organizations/associations, neighborhood committees, businesses, community leaders and councils — is necessary for a functioning democracy and lasting peace. The new government should see that **CSOs are important partners during this transition period as they can act as intermediaries** among the government, international donors and local communities. They can also help build trust in the government and a democratization process, encourage local participation and debate, help inform their communities and encourage more participatory approaches to local decision-making.

It should also be noted that in an immediate post-conflict setting, there are often “**uncivil**” society actors, i.e., those organizations or individuals who are trying to undo transition activities and progress in civil society. These uncivil actors include paramilitaries, terrorists, criminals, warlords and human traffickers. They may try to upend peace and stabilization efforts, challenge the transitional government by creating or continuing rival institutions or claim to better represent marginalized groups. A transitional government may choose to find a way to include some of the uncivil actors that have broad support as a way to minimize their ability to subvert the peace process entirely. Such efforts would be considered a trade-off with international norms, however.

At the same time, leaders must work with civil society to manage expectations on the transition, in addition to increase supporting the peace process. Because post-conflict countries have been marked by violence, and sometimes cycles of violence, there is often a great distrust in government or great hope in a new government. Thus, expectations are either very low or very high. The former makes cooperation and trust difficult, while the latter means it is nearly impossible for government progress to be as swift or deep as desired. Coordinated activities can help manage expectations and build public trust, such as **dialogue mechanisms**.⁴⁵ These mechanisms should involve news organizations, government actors, CSOs and the general public. News organizations should be professional and committed to objectively collecting and presenting information to the public so that government programs, activities, strategies and timetables are better understood. The executive, legislators, international donors and aid organizations also benefit from knowing public opinion and issues important to constituents. Better understanding of the daily reality of citizens helps better inform the creation and implementation of programs, services and activities. Therefore, CSOs can help promote programs that increase the interaction between the public, the government, the media and even international aid organizations. These will help government actors and international agencies to set and communicate more realistic timetables for projects and services that are more responsive. Additionally, civil education programs can promote public understanding about their rights and responsibilities, as well as government projects and strategies that will impact the public.

CSOs can hold the government and government officials accountable for their policies and actions, and act as a check on human rights violations, political corruption, inefficiency and illegitimacy. However, for these checks and balances to be effective, **a new government should vet potential CSO partners**. This vetting is not about punishing political agendas or excluding viewpoints, but should be done to screen out groups with histories of discrimination, violence, strong associations with the previous regime or corrupt or violent political parties.

CSOs can also provide on-the-ground support for international and national organizations, helping implement programs and initiatives. In fact, some international organizations may prefer to work with local-level CSOs rather than national government institutions because CSOs can implement programs more quickly and generally with greater flexibility than national governments. A few ways CSOs contribute to post-conflict recovery include:



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Service delivery

During the war and immediately following a cease-fire, CSOs often provide basic social services and public goods that the government cannot because it is fractured, weakened and/or violent. The interim government should include CSOs in the development, or at least the implementation plans, for initiatives and delivery of public goods and social services because they are frequently more trusted by the communities they serve. By working with CSOs, an interim administration and international donors are building local capacities and ownership of projects and processes, which in turn can increase trust in the government and reduce tensions.

Governance

In addition to holding government officials accountable, civil society can be a key partner in voter education and broad voter turnout. CSOs can help inform debates on electoral reform and host public meetings and information sessions. CSOs can also contribute to overall civic education and public awareness on the importance of the transition as a benchmark in the democratic process. By holding executives and their administrations to account through effective, evidence-based information and statistics, CSOs help impart a critical feedback mechanism by which the government in a transition upholds its promises.

Security

Engaging civil society in security and justice reforms is a necessary condition to political stability. CSOs play an integral role in police and prison reform, in particular. They also help educate the public about the **impacts of reforms in the security sector**, including international peacekeeping forces and national military and police. CSOs inform communities about their rights and responsibilities under new rules and protocols. CSOs representing groups previously subject to ethnic, racial, religious or party discrimination and violence are important voices to add to any “know your rights” campaign. They can help develop factsheets, TV and radio programs, plays, pamphlets, news articles, public meetings and workshops to share important information.

CSOs are valuable partners in DDR efforts. They can provide economic opportunities and trainings, and offer reintegration programs to former combatants. Frequently, leading agencies, such as UNHCR and UNICEF, will partner with CSOs to help with the reintegration not only of former combatants, but also of refugees and internally displaced persons. CSOs complement the work of



A man sells “Gambia has decided” T-shirts in Serekunda, Gambia, January 26, 2017. The #GambiaHasDecided movement was established by a group of individuals working to promote and advance democracy and peace in The Gambia following the peaceful, democratic election of Adama Barrow. The movement became a slogan in the months following the election to inspire a peaceful and smooth transition following President Yahya Jammeh’s loss. Throughout Barrow’s time as president, a consortium of civil society organizations has continued to mobilize advocacy for a smooth democratic transition in the country under the slogan #GambiaWeWant.

Photo credit: Thierry Gouegnon, Reuters/Alamy Stock Photo



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international organizations because they may be known and respected within a community; their staff speak the local languages; and they can better facilitate dialogue because they may be considered a trusted local authority. CSOs can also provide longer-term follow-up than international organizations, providing services and assisting in the often lengthy reintegration process.

CSOs are also critical in mine-clearing initiatives, as they help inform the public, advocate for mine clearing activities and sometimes assist in the clearing efforts or training.

Justice

CSOs help expand citizen access to justice mechanisms. This is especially critical when the country is pursuing a reconciliation mechanism. Victims' rights groups, legal reform advocates, human rights advocates and legal associations can provide legal aid to rural or minority communities, monitor the justice system and promote alternative dispute resolution mechanisms.

Informal justice systems can help during a transition by offering a trusted means of alternative dispute resolution, particularly when the state judicial system is unable to administer justice effectively. CSOs may offer **trainings on informal justice proceedings and protocols**. They may represent a party or provide legal advice. Critically, they may also monitor and report discrimination against a particular group and any human rights abuses. They also help mobilize citizens to stand against these abuses.

However, CSOs can also stoke tensions, as some informal justice systems exclude or are biased against certain groups. A national (and international donor) justice sector reform strategy should include ways to ensure these mechanisms are more inclusive.

Recovery and reconciliation

CSOs are often the **first responders to trauma**, helping citizens and residents cope through trauma-support services and other mental health services. They may also provide additional services, tools, and rituals for their communities to help heal from the conflict.

Civil society is also important in reconciliation mechanisms. For instance, the African National Congress worked with the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) to mobilize citizens to engage in South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission. In the Gambia, the Truth, Reconciliation and Reparations Commission (TRRC) was launched in 2018 to look into alleged human rights violations during the 22-year rule of former Gambian President Yahya Jammeh. The new government wanted to make the TRRC inclusive of all people in the country. In that effort, civil society actors, including victims' rights organizations, were consulted. The TRRC Commission ultimately included people from a variety of civil society organizations, such as Banjul Open Debate, Gambia Africa Institute for Leadership, and the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding, as well as two imams, a bishop, a farmer and a teacher.⁴⁶

Economics

In terms of post-conflict economic recovery, CSOs can support poverty reduction efforts by helping the government and international organizations identify barriers to employment, financial inclusion and other economic drivers. CSOs also develop and implement activities and programs that promote education and employment, particularly youth and women's employment.



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ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- A. Sample training programs in mediation and conflict resolution:
 - [United Nations' Mediation Support Network](#)
 - [United Nations' Women Mediator Networks](#)
 - [Mediators Beyond Borders](#)
- B. [Tool](#) developed by the Public International Law & Policy Group to assist post-conflict constitution drafters
- C. [Terms of Reference](#) for an executive-legislative advisor or liaison
- D. [Terms of Reference](#) of the Humanitarian Coordination Task Team (Bangladesh)
- E. [Sample talking points](#) (U.S. Department of Homeland Security)
- F. [Sample press release templates](#)
- G. [USAID guidance](#) for democracy programming in post-conflict countries
- H. [Form to file a human rights complaint with The Institution of Human Rights Ombudsman of Bosnia and Herzegovina](#)



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Transitions are inevitable and critical moments in democratic systems. Across various political contexts — parliamentary, presidential, semi-presidential, post-conflict — there are unique and important mechanisms for all actors involved that support a successful process.

Though transitions are always context-specific, international experience indicates that smooth transfers of power share similar elements, including:

- ◆ Codifying transition processes under law
- ◆ Preparing early when possible
- ◆ Building a strong executive team
- ◆ Maintaining a robust, nonpartisan civil service
- ◆ Establishing means for cooperation between the incoming/outgoing administrations
- ◆ Exchanging information to the extent possible before a transition, especially on issues concerning national security
- ◆ Creating methods for internal and interagency coordination
- ◆ Planning strategically to establish a clear, consistent and workable leadership vision
- ◆ Developing strategic communications infrastructure and message frameworks
- ◆ Maintaining archives and establishing mechanisms for transparent, inclusive information-sharing

These globally experienced principles offer a foundation for successful leadership transitions, and may serve as the basis for improving transitions of power at all levels of government. Though this guide focuses primarily on the executive level, many lessons included here may be applied to transitions across legislative and subnational levels of government.

Of course, variables will always exist that impact the sustainability of transition processes. Over the course of the development of this guide, for example, the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the efficacy and sustainability of transitions across the globe, creating resource restraints, health and safety impacts and barriers to access and engagement at all levels. Further, with increased electoral challenges and uncertainty as a result of the pandemic, combined with a rise in authoritarian practices, disinformation and abusive exercises of command and control, transitions everywhere continue to be impacted.

In all circumstances, and especially during times of crisis, successful transitions require respect for the democratic process, combined with diligent planning (when possible), and cooperation between and among the actors involved. They should also include means for reflection, analysis and evaluation, to ensure there is learning and engagement on improving processes that meet the unique and dynamic needs of every country over time. Even where transition legal frameworks exist, experiences globally prove that continuing to develop and revise these frameworks over time as a result of learning from different transition experiences helps to improve the process overall.

The work of NDI and its partners to support smooth transitions globally continues to be an evolving project informed by the experiences of actors worldwide. One critical driver in success has been to connect global peers who have experienced and managed transitions. Through these connections, peer officials current and former may share experiences in order to build unique solutions for effective processes. Through the development of a dedicated transitions community of practice, including a group of former chiefs of staff, who provide guidance and support to newly appointed chiefs of staff and senior advisors to the executive, the experiences of those who have undergone a transition offers



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critical insight to those who work through it in real time.

This guide is also meant to be a starting point for additional learning and exploration on this complex and under-resourced topic. As global learning continues to shed light on the unique circumstances surrounding executive transitions, NDI and its partners remain invested in connecting peers and providing assistance in response to global needs.