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Democratisation's Third Wave and the Challenges of Democratic Deepening: Assessing International Democracy Assistance and Lessons Learned

Lise Rakner (Chr. Michelsen Institute), Alina Rocha Menocal (ODI) and Verena Fritz (ODI)

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Overseas Development Institute
111 Westminster Bridge Road
London SE1 7JD, UK
Tel: +44 (0)20 7922 0300
Fax: +44 (0)20 7922 0399
www.odi.org.uk

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List of acronyms

APRM	Africa Peer Review Mechanism
AU	African Union
CCM	Chama Cha Mapinduzi (Tanzanian ruling party)
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
CSO	Civil society organisation
CUF	Civic United Front (Tanzania)
DANIDA	Danish International Development Agency
DFID	UK Department for International Development
DPP	Democratic Progressive Party (Malawi)
EISA	Electoral Institute of Southern Africa
FDC	Forum for Democratic Change (Uganda)
GTZ	German Agency for Technical Co-operation
HIPC	Heavily Indebted Poor Countries
IDEA	International Institute of Elections and Democracy Assistance
IFES	International Foundation for Election Systems
INGO	International Non-governmental organisation
IRI	International Republican Institute
JLOS	Justice Law and Order Sector (Uganda)
MDB	Multilateral development bank
MDC	Movement for Democratic Change (Zimbabwe)
NDI	National Democratic Institute
NEC	National Executive Committee (Tanzania)
NED	National Endowment for Democracy
NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa's Development
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NIMD	Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy
NRM	National Resistance Movement (Uganda)
OAS	Organisation of American States
ODA	Official development assistance
OSCE	Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
SAPS	Structural Adjustment Programmes
Sida	Swedish International Development Co-operation Agency
TPLF-EPRDF	Tigray People's Liberation Front-Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (Ethiopia)
UDF	United Democratic Front (Malawi)
UPC	Uganda Peoples Congress
ZANU PF	Zimbabwe African National Union (Patriotic Front)

Executive summary

This study focuses on democratisation and democracy assistance in the developing world. It provides an overview of the democratisation processes that have swept across the developing world since the 1980s and explores some of the main challenges facing many of these incipient democratic regimes. Moving from theory to practice, the paper also analyses some of the most important forms of democracy assistance that donors have undertaken to support democratisation processes over the past two decades.

The report is divided into four main chapters. Chapter 1 defines the parameters of this study and situates democratisation processes and democratisation support in the wider context of governance changes and donor policy choices. Democratisation evolved from a trickle into a wave in the developing world with the end of the Cold War. Democratisation assistance has become a substantial element in the development agenda of many donors, especially the US and a number of European bilateral agencies. Post 9/11, new challenges have emerged. While donors have been increasingly engaged in state-building and democratisation efforts in 'fragile states', this report focuses on states in the developing world more generally and, hence, does not provide specific guidance on these more 'extreme' environments.

Chapter 2 reviews the academic literature on the Third Wave of democratisation and explores the specific democratisation trajectories found in African countries, namely democratic consolidation, democratic processes 'stuck in transition' and 'political meltdown'. The chapter covers fundamental conceptual debates about democratic transitions and the challenges of democratic consolidation. It analyses the emergence of 'hybrid regimes' – political systems where a formal transition to democracy has taken place but where authoritarian practices and (informal) institutions continue to persist.

Chapter 3 examines why and how donors have sought to support democratisation processes. It provides an overview of some of the main approaches that donors have taken to democracy promotion, the main actors and institutions involved, and the objectives that such assistance has sought to achieve. In particular, the chapter compares US and European approaches to democracy assistance and discusses five key avenues of democratisation assistance: support to i) elections, ii) political parties, iii) judicial reform, iv) civil society, and v) the media. It also identifies the various challenges related to each area.

Key findings are summarised in Chapter 4. Over the past two decades, democratisation processes have emerged in many low-income countries – in contradiction to earlier modernisation theory which held that democratisation was only possible above a certain level of development. The consolidation of democratic regimes has proven more challenging in many of these countries, however. Democratisation assistance is still not sufficiently adapted to the challenging contexts of democratisation processes which are often either stuck, or at risk of meltdown. It is too standardised, still frequently focuses on elections rather than on wider structural and institutional changes, and seeks results too quickly. Moreover, harmonisation and alignment among a rather fragmented field of actors and more rigorous and comprehensive assessments of 'what works' are urgently needed to share experiences and lessons more systematically and improve current practice.

This study is part of a wider research programme which the three consortium partners – the Overseas Development Institute, the Chr. Michelsen Institute, and the Economic and Social Research Foundation – are undertaking for the Advisory Board of Irish Aid. The overall programme 'Good Governance, New Aid Modalities and Poverty Reduction' addresses changes in governance and how these have been supported by donors; as well as the evolving nature of the aid relationship, with a focus on low-income countries in Africa but drawing on the experience of various regions.

1. Introduction

This paper focuses on democratisation and democracy assistance in the developing world. Its geographical emphasis is on the experiences in the African continent, but also draws on experiences from other regions of the developing world (Latin America, Eastern Europe, East Asia and the Middle East). Our purpose is two-fold. Firstly, the paper is intended to provide a theoretically-grounded overview of the democratisation processes that have swept across the developing world since the 1980s and explore some of the main challenges facing many of these new incipient democratic regimes. Secondly, moving from theory to practice, the paper analyses some of the most important forms of democracy assistance that donors have undertaken to support such democratisation processes. It concludes by drawing some key lessons and implications aimed at informing future donor practices.

1.1 The emergence of democracy assistance

Following the democratic transitions of the late 1980s and early 1990s and the ebbing of the Cold War, democracy promotion became a key element of foreign policy and development assistance. In addition to governments, multilateral organisations and a large number of national and international non-governmental organisations (NGOs) renewed and expanded their commitments to international engagement to support democracy. A consensus developed within the international community that considerations of national sovereignty should not shelter a country's internal political arrangements from outside observation or criticism. Thus, not only did democracy emerge as a universal aspiration, but norms also emerged in the international community indicating that it was legitimate to have an interest in promoting and supporting democracy abroad (Bjørnlund, 2004; Burnell, 2000).

On this basis, the 1990s witnessed a mushrooming of democracy assistance projects from bilateral governments and related efforts by non-governmental and multilateral organisations. It is difficult to provide figures on the aggregate amount of democracy assistance due to definitional problems and weaknesses in recording the data. However, it is estimated that by the turn of the millennium, approximately US$2 billion per year – about half from private and public sources in the US and half from largely public sources in Europe – were allocated for democracy-related projects (Carothers, 2004: 2; Youngs, 2006). Throughout the world, American, European and multilateral organisations have engaged in a variety of activities, including advising political parties, providing aid to government agencies, training judges, strengthening civil society, conducting civic education campaigns and helping to develop new constitutions and electoral laws. While the US is by far the single largest provider of democracy assistance internationally,[1] Germany has provided the largest proportion of such funding in Europe, spending around €200 million in 2004 (see Box 4, Section 3).

1.2 Democracy assistance and the broader 'good governance' agenda

Democracy promotion has constituted a significant part of development assistance during the past two decades. However, it is important to note that democracy assistance constitutes only one aspect of a much broader international agenda to support 'good governance'. Donor programmes that sit under the heading of 'good governance' comprise a range of activities that go well beyond what would be narrowly construed as democratic assistance. While the concept of 'good governance' remains relatively vague and difficult to define, there lies at its core a concern about *how* states should govern – that is, about the rules and practices according to which governments

[1] USAID funding for democracy promotion grew almost six-fold between 1990 and 2003. USAID is by far the largest single source of funding, spending $830 m. in 2003 (Finkel et al., 2006). For European donors, no comprehensive data on democracy support are currently available; in various ways, such support is part of wider 'good governance' or 'public-sector' support, and/or support to civil society. Likewise, no precise data are available for key multilateral development banks (MDBs), such as the World Bank. Overall, $2 bn is likely to be a conservative estimate.

are chosen and state power and authority are exercised (Kjaer, 2004). Clearly, accountability and checks and balances are part and parcel of an effort to build stronger democratic institutions, but other aspects of the good governance agenda, such as state capacity and effective service delivery, require different types of intervention.

Current thinking and international discussions on democratisation in the developing world seem to be based on the assumption that today's democratic transitions are being built on the foundations of coherent, functioning states. But in reality, as this report will show, many of the countries stuck in incomplete democratisation processes are not only trying to democratise but are also more fundamentally grappling with the task of building a capable state. As Carothers (2002) has argued, to the extent that international democracy assistance has considered the possibility of state-building as part of the democratisation process, it has too easily assumed that the fostering of democracy and state-building are one and the same thing. However, the conflation of these two processes is at best problematic.

The relationship between democratisation and improving other aspects of governance can sometimes be complex. To some degree, these two agendas pull in opposite directions. For instance, democratisation often entails diffusing power more evenly across a greater number of actors both within and outside government, whilst strengthening state capacity may call for greater centralisation of power and autonomy in the decision-making process. State-building requires, above all, the strengthening of state institutions and the consolidation/centralisation of state power, while democracy promotion calls for the substantial diffusion and redistribution of state power. Thus, while the good governance agenda tends to assume that 'all good things go together', some tensions are glossed over. One of the central challenges for donors therefore remains to bridge the divide between assistance programmes directed at fostering democracy and those focused on promoting social and economic development more broadly.

On the other hand, the focus of this report is on democracy assistance and not on good governance more generally, and it is therefore outside our scope to address these tensions in detail.[2] Nonetheless, as the discussion reveals, when donors make choices regarding which forms of democracy assistance to support, they must often also consider other aspects of good governance which may or may not work with democratisation efforts in a mutually reinforcing manner.[3]

1.3 Democracy assistance and 'fragile states'

The aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attacks has given new resonance to the discourse on democracy assistance, albeit with a twist. In the current international political context, development objectives have become intricately fused with (if not subsumed under) foreign policy objectives. At least in principle, democratisation in poor countries has become a key component of the global security agenda and, as such, is now a central foreign policy objective of powerful states. This is particularly evident in the US, where the Bush administration has come to define non-democratic, fragile and poorly-governed states as the most significant threat to national security (Cammack et al., 2006). At least at the rhetorical level, then, the goals of security, state-building and the promotion of democracy have become closely linked. In the most extreme cases, military force has been used to pursue (democratic) 'regime change' alongside other foreign policy objectives. The US-led coalition initially undertook the invasion of Iraq for the stated objectives of fighting terrorism and preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction; but its goals also included bringing about 'regime change' in the form of promoting 'freedom' and installing a democratic political system.

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[2] The synthesis report will address some of these issues (drawing also on work packages 2-5 and 7).

[3] We are grateful to Bill Morton from the North-South Institute for his comments on this issue. For a more in-depth discussion of the good governance agenda, see Fritz and Rocha Menocal (2006). A work package on governance indicators has also been commissioned by Irish Aid as part of the overall project on Good Governance and Aid Effectiveness.

On the other hand, the interventions in Afghanistan, and in particular in Iraq, have given democracy promotion a bad name in some circles. The status of the US as a symbol of democracy and democracy promotion has been challenged by reactions to the country's military operations in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Guantanamo Bay.[4] Furthermore, pointing to the impressive economic transformation of China over the past two decades, authoritarian leaders in the Middle East and Asia are increasingly justifying repressive politics, arguing that pressures to democratise their political systems may jeopardise economic development and other important objectives.

It should be noted that, while donors have been increasingly engaged in state-building and democratisation efforts in what the international community has come to define as 'fragile states', this report focuses on states in the developing world more generally, and hence does not provide specific guidance on these more 'extreme' environments. On the other hand, a number of the more general lessons raised in the paper about what democracy assistance has (and has not) achieved and the challenges it confronts are also likely to apply in such contexts.[5]

1.4 Assessing democratic developments and democracy assistance

This report is divided into three main sections. Following this introduction, Section 2 reviews the academic literature on democratisation processes in new or emerging democracies. The section outlines the different stages involved in democratisation, focusing in particular on democratic transitions and the challenges to democratic consolidation. Section 3 assesses the available material – academic analyses, reports and evaluations – regarding the role of external actors in supporting democratisation processes and the actors and institutions involved.[6] Based on these analyses, Section 4 outlines a list of lessons and a set of implications and recommendations for improved donor practice.

Democratic transition and consolidation: What do we know?
Scholars have developed different approaches to explain why and how transitions to democracy happen. The modernisation school emphasises the salience of structural prerequisites (such as levels of economic development) for democracy to emerge. Process-oriented approaches, on the other hand, stress the importance of contingency and interactions between key actors. Based on the transitions to democracy that have taken place during the so-called 'Third Wave' of democratisation[7] (Huntington, 1991), this report analyses the strengths and weaknesses of these different approaches. It also notes that, while some of the literature discusses the role of external factors in facilitating such transitions, most of the scholarly work on democratic transitions focuses on the internal factors and dynamics that have made these transitions possible.

The discussion of democratic consolidation focuses on the emergence of what the literature has come to define as 'hybrid regimes'. These are political systems that are caught in a grey zone: they have made a formal transition to democracy and hold elections at regular intervals, but thus far they have been unable to consolidate their incipient democratic structures. A majority of the countries that experienced a democratic transition during the Third Wave find themselves in this category, which is why it is so important to understand what kind of challenges these regimes confront and what needs to be done to make their democratic structures more resilient and responsive. The report emphasises that the international community has an important role to play in promoting democratic consolidation (especially in terms of leverage and linkages), but that such

[4] See the presentation by Thomas Carothers: 'Responding to the democracy promotion backlash', Testimony of Thomas Carothers to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee Hearing, 8 June 2006. The changing international perception of the US is particularly significant due to the country's role as the largest single source of democracy assistance.
[5] See Cammack et al. (2006) for a recent review of fragile states and how leading donors are engaging with them.
[6] As the paper focuses on issues of relevance to Irish Aid, it focuses more on the *support* for democratisation than on the role of conditionality or similar forms of external *demand* for democracy.
[7] See Section 2.2 for an in-depth discussion of the Third Wave.

assistance will not succeed in the absence of a domestic constituency committed to democratic deepening.

Emphasising democratic developments in sub-Saharan Africa, the report argues that only a few African political systems that launched democratic institutions in the early 1990s have so far developed into institutionalised, consolidated democracies. However, major differences exist in terms of democratisation experiences between countries in the African continent. We identify three broad 'types': consolidating democracies, regimes 'stuck in transition' (i.e. hybrid regimes), and regimes that may be characterised as experiencing a 'meltdown' of democratic institutions. Building on the analysis of the challenges of democratisation (particularly to democratic consolidation), Section 2 then endeavours to explain these three trajectories of democratic (non-) development. It highlights in particular the interplay between formal structures and informal power relations, declining economies and a weak private sector, as well as the role of external actors, most notably, the international assistance community.

The role of external actors in supporting democratisation processes: Lessons learned

Moving to empirical lessons for international aid, Section 3 reviews some of the most significant forms that democracy assistance has taken over the past two decades. We examine five areas of democracy promotion that are particularly important and/or prevalent among donors: i) assistance to elections and electoral processes; ii) political parties; iii) judicial reform; iv) civil society; and v) the media.[8] Each of these areas of democracy assistance is discussed in terms of how they are defined and why they are important, who the main actors involved in such assistance are (both donors and recipients), what type of assistance has been provided, what lessons have emerged, and what challenges remain.

Lessons and implications for donors

Section 4 concludes by drawing together some of the main lessons learned from almost three decades of democracy assistance and identifies implications to inform future donor practice. We suggest that incomplete democratisation processes during the Third Wave and the predominance of 'hybrid regimes' pose serious challenges to the sustainability, capacity, responsiveness and effectiveness of democratic institutions, which remain unaccountable for the most part. Furthermore, the report illustrates that interactions between internal dynamics and external assistance for democracy are complex. In order to be sustainable, democratisation impulses need to come from within; external actors have a positive role to play in efforts to strengthen/deepen democratic structures, but they cannot act as substitutes when domestic support is lacking.

Key lessons from donor efforts to promote democratisation highlight the following:

- Democratisation efforts need to be driven from within in order to be successful and sustainable over time. Donors need to be both realistic and humble about what can be achieved from the outside.
- Donors need to understand and acknowledge more explicitly that democracy assistance is inherently political.
- Democracy assistance should avoid reliance on idealised blueprints that are not sensitive to local political, cultural and socio-economic contexts.
- It is important to achieve a balance between providing support and avoiding dominance and 'external ownership' of democratisation efforts.
- There is an inherent contradiction between the long-term processes of democracy and the need for international aid agencies to report on results. Donors need to come to terms more seriously with the potential tensions that arise in the kinds of assistance that they provide due to these very different time horizons.

[8] Other work packages commissioned by Irish Aid from ODI, CMI and additional partner organisations focus on other donor initiatives that are in many ways deeply connected to the democracy assistance agenda, including decentralisation and efforts to combat corruption, therefore these are not addressed in any great detail in this report.

- How to engage with hybrid regimes has emerged as one of the main challenges for donors providing democracy assistance. This is reflected in the paradox of continued executive dominance and limited democratisation. We find that, overall, donor financing may have contributed to this situation through its tendency to champion personalities (especially within the executive) who often end up transcending institutions, as well as its inadequate attention to local contexts. Donors need to focus on strengthening accountability and oversight mechanisms and on supporting institutions that can counter-balance the power of the executive.
- Our analysis also suggests that democracy assistance needs to relate more systematically to the grass-roots level, and incorporate/strengthen non-traditional civil society sectors.
- There is an acute need for international aid agencies to report on results and to carry out more meso- and macro-level evaluations of democratisation assistance so that experiences and lessons can be shared more systematically.
- Donors often pursue democratisation efforts as only one aspect of a much broader agenda to promote good governance and overall state capacity. Donors should therefore be cautious to achieve a balance between different goals that may at times pull in different directions. As suggested by the good enough governance agenda, they need to prioritise their objectives and think about how best to sequence them in order not to 'overload' a given country with too many demands.
- Harmonisation and alignment in democratisation assistance remains a challenge and urgently needs to be addressed. This is particularly important in the context of hybrid regimes, where donor fragmentation and lack of country ownership further undermine already weak institutions.
- Finally, democracy assistance does not operate in a vacuum but takes place alongside the pursuit of other foreign policy objectives. This is why greater policy coherence is highly desirable in order to ensure that efforts on one front are not undermined by activities in other areas.

2. Understanding democracy: A review of key debates

This section reviews key debates within the academic literature relating to democracy and the process of democratisation in developing countries. In particular, the section addresses the following questions:

- How should 'democracy' be defined?
- What does 'democratisation' entail?
- What are democratic transitions and how do we explain them?
- What is democratic consolidation and what factors make it more or less likely to be achieved?
- How should states that fail to consolidate into full-fledged democratic regimes be characterised?
- How can we explain the different democratisation trajectories that have occurred in Africa?

2.1 Defining democracy: Minimalist vs. more substantive definitions

2.1.1 Minimalist definitions of democracy

At its most basic level, the democratic method is 'that institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people's vote' (Schumpeter, 1942). Expanding on this definition, Dahl (1971) identifies seven key criteria that are essential for democracy, namely:[9]

1. Control over governmental decisions about policy constitutionally vested in elected officials
2. Relatively frequent, fair and free elections
3. Universal adult suffrage
4. The right to run for public office
5. Freedom of expression
6. Access to alternative sources of information that are not monopolised by either the government or any other single group
7. Freedom of association (i.e. the right to form and join autonomous associations such as political parties, interest groups, etc).

While still minimalist, Dahl's definition of formal democracy includes the basic civil liberties that should, in principle, guarantee that the democratic process is inclusive, free of repression and enables citizens to participate in an informed and autonomous manner. However, the focus of this definition, on which most of the literature on transitions to democracy is based, is still on contestation, or the electoral process itself. For a long time, the international community has also tended to place tremendous faith in the determinative importance of elections and what they can achieve for the democratisation process – there is an implicit assumption that 'elections will be not just a foundation stone but a key generator over time of further democratic reforms' (Carothers, 2002).

2.1.2 More substantive definitions of democracy

As will be explained in greater detail below, the process of democratisation entails not only a transition to formal democracy, but also the consolidation of such a democratic system. As analysts have found, however, relying on a minimalist definition of democracy cannot quite capture the challenges besetting regimes that have undergone a transition but have yet to consolidate their incipient democratic structures. As a result, a growing number of democratisation experts are

[9] Referred to by Dahl as 'polyarchy'.

turning towards a more substantive definition of democracy, one that gives more prominence to the role and importance of accountability.

Three dimensions of accountability are usually distinguished:[10] (i) vertical accountability, which enables citizens to hold their political leaders to account through the electoral channel at specified points in time; (ii) horizontal accountability, which refers to accountability mechanisms that exist within the distinct bodies of government itself, whereby state institutions are authorised and willing to oversee, control, redress and, if need be, sanction unlawful actions by other state institutions (O'Donnell, 1996); and (iii) societal accountability, which refers to the (ongoing) watchdog functions of civic associations, other NGOs and an independent mass media over the actions of the state (Schedler et al., 1999).

There is also a debate on whether 'real' democracy can only be said to be achieved in those political regimes that foster economic equality and social justice.[11] Our view is that such a maximalist understanding of democracy risks overburdening the concept and places unrealistic expectations and/or demands on what democratic regimes should achieve by sheer virtue of being democracies.[12]

2.2 The 'Third Wave' of democratisation

2.2.1 Understanding the different stages of democratisation

A wave of democratisation, originating in Portugal and Spain in the 1970s, swept across the developing world in the 1980s and 1990s. This so-called 'Third Wave' (Huntington, 1991) moved across Latin America and Eastern Europe, and later Asia and Africa. The transformation in the nature of political regimes was remarkable: while in 1974 there were 41 democracies among the existing 150 states, by 2003 about three-fifths of all the world's states[13] were considered formal democracies (Diamond, 2006), however imperfect they might be.

Democratisation can be understood as a process subdivided into three phases: (i) the liberalisation phase, when the previous authoritarian regime opens up or crumbles; (ii) a transition phase, often culminating when the first competitive elections are held; and (iii) the consolidation phase, when democratic practices are expected to become more firmly established and accepted by most relevant actors (O'Donnell and Schmitter, 1986; Linz and Stepan, 1996). This final phase is essential for establishing durable democratic regimes. As will be discussed later in this section, it has also proved to be the most challenging for emerging democracies in the developing world.

It is essential to remember, however, that democratisation processes need not be linear, and in a number of cases democratic openings and transitions have not resulted in consolidated democracies. Instead, many regimes end up 'getting stuck' in transition, or reverting to more or less authoritarian forms of rule. These so-called 'unconsolidated' or 'hybrid' regimes have become

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[10] The debate on what constitutes an accountability relationship is ongoing. Some analysts include external accountability as a fourth form of democratic accountability. For overviews of the theoretical debates, see Mainwaring and Welna (2003); Gloppen and Rakner (2003); Goetz and Jenkins (2005).

[11] A number of authors have criticised the liberal democratic framework for excluding social and economic aspects of democratisation (Mkandawire, 2001; Sandbrook, 2000). Others have argued that the formal, or liberal, notion of democracy is too elitist and that aspects of participation are neglected (Pateman, 1970; Chambers, 1996).

[12] The distinction between state and regime type is central to this debate. A key function of the state is to promote economic growth and deliver developmental outcomes. Regime type refers to the form of government and the way decisions are made. We therefore opt for a definition of democracy that focuses on process rather than outcome: a democracy should not be expected to produce better socio-economic outcomes by sheer virtue of being a democracy; it should be expected to arrive at policy decisions in a way that is inclusive, broadly representative of different societal interests, transparent and accountable.

[13] 121 of 193 according to Freedom House (http://www.freedomhouse.org/).

the focus of considerable attention for academics and policy-makers alike, and are discussed in greater detail in the remainder of this section.

2.2.2 Transitions to democracy: Why and how do they happen?

Box 1: Transitions to democracy

The general propositions that scholars analysing democratic transitions in the Third Wave have arrived at can be summarised as follows:

- There are few preconditions for the *emergence* of democracy.
- No single structural factor (high levels of socio-economic development, etc.) is sufficient or even necessary for the emergence of democracy.
- However, political will and commitment by at least a few key elite actors is a necessary, if not sufficient, condition.
- The interactions between key political actors and the choices they make are critical in bringing about democratic institutions, but these are themselves shaped by the context within which they operate.
- External factors and international actors can play a significant role in supporting transitions to democracy, but cannot bring about change on their own in the absence of a domestic coalition committed to such change.

Modernisation vs. process-oriented approaches to transitions to democracy

The mainstream literature of the 1960s and 1970s (Lipset, 1959; Almond and Verba, 1963; Moore, 1966) espoused a modernisation approach to democratisation, emphasising that democracy was more likely to emerge in countries with high(er) levels of socio-economic development.[14] Some studies also emphasised the importance of cultural and religious factors, and of historical legacies (i.e. previous experiences with democratisation). Such *structuralist* approaches to democratisation understood the emergence of democracy as a consequence of the transformation of class structure, the emergence of a bourgeoisie economic development, increasing urbanisation, the prior development of democratic values and other socio-economic factors.

The Third Wave of democratisation challenged this concept of 'prerequisites' for democracy. While the modernisation argument provides an explanation for transition in South Korea, Taiwan, Thailand and Chile, many of the movements towards formal democracy took place in countries where such transformation would not have been expected based on low levels of economic development and other socio-economic indicators. A large number of countries experiencing a transition to democracy during the Third Wave fell in the bottom third of the Human Development Index. Third Wave transitions also defied cultural arguments positing that democracy is incompatible with certain faiths and religious values.[15] The only region that seems to remain relatively outside this wave of democratisation is the Arab World (Stepan with Roberston 2003).[16]

In response to the relative inability of structural approaches to explain Third Wave democratisation processes, a new literature on democratic transition emerged in the 1980s adopting an *agency* or

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[14] Much of this literature was based on Lipset's seminal work of 1959, where he highlighted one of the most enduring correlations in the social sciences: the relationship between high levels of economic development and democracy. However, correlation does not mean causation – a strong correlation between high levels of economic development and democracy does not necessarily mean that economic development causes democracy.

[15] (Peaceful) transitions to democracy took place in countries evincing every major religious or philosophical tradition, including Christian, Jewish, Hindu, Buddhist, Confucian and Muslim. For a critique of these cultural arguments, see Zakaria (1997).

[16] Stepan (with Robertson) (2003) suggests that there are important differences between Arab and non-Arab Muslim countries and their democratic potential. The authors attribute the 'democracy gap' of Arab countries primarily to the political and socio-economic contexts — which include factors such as oil, the geo-politics of the region and the manipulation of the Arab-Israeli conflict, among others – and only to a lesser degree to anything inherent in Arab culture itself.

process-oriented approach. This literature emphasised the importance of decisions, ideas and the interaction among strategic political actors in bringing about transitions in 'unlikely places'. This tradition stressed the uncertainty and possibilities surrounding transitions to democracy. In particular, a consensus emerged that economic development *per se* was neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for democratic transition (see, among others, O'Donnell and Schmitter, 1986; Przeworski and Limongi, 1997).[17]

As will be discussed in Section 3 of this report, this strong focus on agency and choice was particularly influential during the first period of democracy assistance. However, a fundamental weakness of this process-oriented approach is that its emphasis on contingent choice may lead to excessive voluntarism. By understating the role of structural incentives and constraints in its analysis, this literature tends to assume that actors are freewheeling agents independent of any political, economic, social and/or historical context. Yet consideration of such structural determinants is crucial in explaining individual preferences, relative bargaining power and how interests may change over time. Since the 1990s, there has been an attempt to combine structural and agency-related factors to achieve a deeper and more balanced understanding of what drives democratic transition processes. Some of the most notable works using this combined approach include Haggard and Kaufman (1995), Rueschemeyer et al. (1992), Huntington (1991), and Bratton and van de Walle (1994).[18]

Exogenous factors: The role of external influences and outside actors in transitions to democracy

Much of the literature discussed above on transitions to democracy during the Third Wave tends to focus on the internal dynamics of change and, as a result, pays little attention to the role played by outside forces. An important exception is Huntington's *The Third Wave* (1991), in which the author emphasises that the actions of governments and institutions external to a particular country (such as the Catholic Church) may at times influence, perhaps decisively, the process of democratic transition. As Huntington points out, for Portugal and Spain (as well as Greece) for instance, establishing a democracy and gaining entry into the European Union went hand in hand. Gorbachev's policies and the end of the Cold War were key factors in triggering the democratic transformation of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. The role of external factors was especially strong with regard to the transition to democracy in Africa (and possibly low-income and aid-dependent countries elsewhere). These transitions were the result, not only of the determination of national political actors, but also of external pressures and incentives (for example, withholding aid from repressive regimes).

Aside from deliberate conditionality, another important international force is so-called 'snowballing' – i.e. the effects of diffusion (Huntington, 1991). As demonstrated in Eastern Europe and Latin America, transitions to democracy often trigger subsequent transitions in other countries within the same region. This is one reason for the perception that regional organisations such as the African Union (AU) and the Organisation of American States (OAS) sometimes offer the potential to act as catalysts of positive change and transformation. In the particular case of Africa, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), formally adopted in July 2001 by African heads of state, is now widely seen as the continent's main official development framework. Among other things, the Partnership states that Africa's development 'is impossible in the absence of true democracy, respect for human rights, peace and good governance'. It commits African leaders to promoting these principles in their own countries and regionally. In this context, the Africa Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) has been created as an initiative to use peer pressure and demonstration effects to assess progress and performance among participating countries towards achieving agreed goals in areas such as democracy and political governance.

[17] One of the founding academic studies of this agency or process-oriented approach was O'Donnell and Schmitter's *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule* (1986).

[18] Bratton and van de Walle's (1994) study constitutes the first comprehensive analysis of democratic transitions in sub-Saharan Africa comparing the African experiences to democratisation in Latin America and Eastern Europe.

The APRM is an African self-monitoring mechanism voluntarily acceded to by member states of the African Union. Its purpose is to ensure that the policies and practices of participating states conform to agreed political, economic and corporate governance values, codes and standards, and promote political stability, economic growth, sustainable development and regional economic integration. The APR monitoring process takes place through periodic peer review to analyse and assess progress and performance among participating countries towards achieving mutually agreed goals in the areas of Democracy and Political Governance, Economic Governance and Management, Corporate Governance and Socio-economic Development. The process also entails sharing experiences and identifying and promoting good and best practices, as well as undertaking interventions to build capacity. The APRM itself is intended to be reviewed every five years.

The APRM is pioneering because it is the first such self-monitoring mechanism to emerge from the region to promote some form of mutual accountability among African governments. As a result, it enjoys a high degree of legitimacy among the African states that have so far chosen to take part in it. The idea is to allow African states to evaluate their peers in a manner that will collectively raise the bar on governance standards and performance. As of July 2006, 25 countries had formally signed up to the APRM. However, because it is purely voluntary in nature and lacks any formal enforceability mechanisms, its success rests on the level of commitment in participating countries and the effectiveness with which they manage the process. On the other hand, there is recognition among donors that, because of its legitimacy among African states, the APRM represents the best institutional alternative available at the international level for engaging with Africa and, as such, it is essential to work with it. Thus far, the APRM has passed its first test cases involving Ghana, Kenya, Rwanda and South Africa, with the expectation that there will be more. It is also important to note that, because the initiative is still in its early years, the literature on the subject remains limited.

Notwithstanding the general importance of external impulses, most academic experts emphasise that the commitment of a critical number of key domestic political actors is instrumental in making transitions to democracy possible. Regional frameworks like the OAS or NEPAD can at best exert pressure, but their pronouncements and resolutions lack authority and they cannot be enforced in any binding way. From what can be gleaned from the diversity of experiences within the Third Wave of democratisation in Latin America, Africa and Asia, it seems that internal political will *is* a necessary (albeit not sufficient) condition for democratic transition. As the case of Iraq demonstrates, efforts to institute democracy by force from the outside without sufficient support from within are bound to be extremely challenging and unsustainable, and, to put it mildly, their success cannot be guaranteed. On the other hand, external factors can play a significant role in shaping the preferences and relative bargaining positions of key domestic actors. In this way, they can be very influential and, in certain cases, even critical in terms of accompanying/ complementing/strengthening domestic forces committed to democratic change. As Burnell puts it (2001a: 5), 'generally speaking democracy assistance is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for a democratic opening or for building democracy, although it could come close to being essential in some countries … Outsiders lend support to a process that is locally driven.'

As is discussed in greater detail in Section 3 on democratic assistance, it is also essential to keep in mind that interventions by external actors are driven by multiple motives: foreign policy, geopolitics, and development policy. In the late 1980s and 1990s, for example, many analysts noted that US diplomatic and economic pressure was significant in the democratic transitions of many countries, including Bolivia, Kenya, Korea, Nigeria and the Philippines. However, US influence and pressure have not always been used to further the cause of democracy. As the experiences of Chile and Nicaragua, among others, help to illustrate, very often the US has used its leverage to strengthen (overtly or covertly) authoritarian/military regimes perceived as important partners in countering the threat of communism or otherwise supporting key US priorities. In the aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the US has blended its foreign policy and development goals (if not subsumed the latter within the former), arguing that poor, undemocratic and badly governed states now constitute the biggest threat to US national security and interests. Once again, however, the US has been less than consistent in the way it has pursued democratisation reforms

in different countries. Thus, while external actors have sought democratisation in many cases, the same external actor(s) may support non-democratic regimes elsewhere (recent examples include Egypt and Pakistan) or may accept clearly circumscribed progress (e.g. Vietnam). Furthermore, some external actors who have acquired considerable international influence and power over the past few decades, most notably emerging/non-DAC donors such as China,[19] Russia and Saudi Arabia, may not favour the emergence of democratic regimes.

2.2.3 Democratic consolidation: An elusive goal?

Box 2: Democratic consolidation

Research and experience with democratic consolidation and external support to this phase of the democratisation process can be summarised as follows:

- Democratic transitions do not necessarily result in successful consolidation; but may evolve into hybrid regimes (which may be more or less unstable) or lead to reversals to more authoritarian forms of rule.
- While structural factors were found to matter less with regard to initiating transitions to democracy, they are much more important in the process of consolidating democratic regimes.
- In hybrid regimes, horizontal and societal forms of accountability are often weak, which reduces the presumed benefits from democratisation for other aspects of governance (e.g. rule of law, respect for human rights/freedom from repression, etc.).
- Elections are increasingly recognised as a necessary but insufficient element of democratisation processes.
- Hybrid regimes and weak states are a problematic combination with regard to effective policies.
- Leverage (e.g. military interventions, aid) and linkage (interactions with actors and institutions in established democracies) are distinguished as wider sets of external factors.
- The need to focus on the interaction and potential tensions between state-building and democratisation is emphasised.

Non-consolidation and the emergence of 'hybrid' regimes

For a long time, neither the 'prerequisites' nor the 'agency' approach to democratisation discussed above paid sufficient attention to the potential problems of incomplete transitions to democracy, the emergence of 'hybrid' regimes (neither autocracies nor consolidated democracies), and reverse transitions. But, as explained in this and the following sections of the report, initial expectations that most countries experiencing democratic transitions would move in a linear fashion towards consolidated, institutionalised democracies – what Francis Fukuyama enthusiastically describes as 'the end of history' – have not been met.

The wave of 'democratic optimism' in the 1990s associated with the global triumph of democracy and capitalism around the world has given way to more sober appraisals about the current health of democratic systems in the developing world. There is growing recognition that the holding of elections alone does not offer a cure for the deeper political and social problems besetting states in many developing countries. In particular, the inability of many of these new democracies to meet the demands and basic needs of its citizens, including the promotion of economic development, has led to critical questions about their nature, quality, efficiency and sustainability over time. Only a limited number of countries that have undergone transitions to democracy have in fact succeeded in establishing consolidated and functioning democratic regimes. Instead, most of these countries in transition have come to occupy a precarious middle ground between outright authoritarianism and fully-fledged democracy,[20] while a number of others have experienced (partial) reversals to authoritarianism (see Table 1).

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[19] China's engagement with Africa over the past decade or so offers a particularly interesting illustration of this phenomenon. See Economy and Monaghan (2006) for a brief analysis.

[20] According to Carothers (2002: 9), '[o]f the nearly 100 countries considered as "transitional" in recent years, only a relatively small number – probably fewer than 20 – are clearly en route to becoming successful, well-functioning democracies or at least have made some democratic progress. The leaders of the group are found primarily in Central Europe and the Baltic region … though there are a few in South America, … Asia [and Africa].'

These incipient democracies, which have been variously described as 'illiberal' (Zakaria, 1997), 'delegative' (O'Donnell, 1996) or, more generally, 'hybrid' regimes (Diamond, 2002),[21] constitute 'ambiguous systems that combine rhetorical acceptance of liberal democracy, the existence of some formal democratic institutions and respect for a limited sphere of civil and political liberties with essentially illiberal or even authoritarian traits' (Ottaway, 2003). Over the past few years, academics and policy-makers alike have focused increasing attention on the challenges and dilemmas that these 'grey zone' countries confront in regions across the globe.[22]

Table 1: Classification of regimes in sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America, 1972 and 2005

	1972			2004		
	Autocracies	Hybrid regimes	Democracies	Autocracies	Hybrid regimes	Democracies
Sub-Saharan Africa	25	9	2	15	17	10
Latin America and Caribbean	4	9	7	2	8	10

Source: Freedom House (2007) 'Country Ratings' (http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=15).

Challenges to democratic consolidation

While, as noted in the previous section, the literature on transitions to democracy emphasise that there are very few preconditions for the emergence of democracy, analysts seem to be reaching a consensus that structural factors – such as underlying economic, social and institutional conditions and legacies – may have a considerable impact on the prospects of democratic consolidation. Above all, democratic consolidation requires the evolution of a democratic political culture where all the main political players (both in the elite and the mass public), parties, organised interests, forces and institutions view and accept democracy as 'the only game in town'. This, in essence, is the main concept embedded in Przeworski's (1991) definition of democracy as 'institutionalised uncertainty': in a democracy, all outcomes are unknown and are open to contest among key players (e.g. who will win an electoral contest, what policies will be enacted, etc.), and the only certainty is that such outcomes will be determined within the framework of pre-established democratic rules. In other words, the democratic process needs to be viewed as the only legitimate means to gain power and to channel/process demands. Admittedly, the building and strengthening of such a democratic political culture is bound to take a long time, and this is the main challenge hybrid regimes are facing today.

Because, for the most part, a broad consensus among both the elites and the mass public to uphold democracy as the only viable system of rule is lacking, hybrid regimes tend to be particularly unstable (Levitsky and Way, 2005). Commitment to the rules of the game is at best 'instrumental' (i.e. based on performance) and not 'principled' (i.e. based on political attributes) (Whitehead, 2002). In a much discussed quantitative analysis, Przeworski and Limongi (1997), for example, find that, while there is no minimal level of economic development (measured in terms of per capita income) that is necessary for a country to be able to make a transition to democracy, economic development has a very important impact on the *sustainability* of democratic systems. Looking at cross-regional data from 1950 to 1990 on a wide variety of well-performing and poor-performing democracies, the authors find that the less successful democratic regimes are in generating economic growth, the more likely they are to break down.

The fact that, contrary to what Przeworski and Limongi would have predicted, there have been few breakdowns of democracy even among the poorest countries may offer some solace. But it

[21] It is important to note that 'hybrid regimes' are not the same as what donors have increasingly come to call 'fragile states'. For an analysis of what 'fragile states' mean to different donors and a discussion of different approaches to provide assistance to such states, see Cammack et al. (2006).

[22] Some of the most significant analyses in this growing literature include Diamond (2002), Carothers (2002), Gyimah-Boadi (2001), Linz and Stepan (1996), O'Donnell (1996), Ottaway (2003), Zakaria (1997) and Schedler (2006).

nevertheless remains true that democracies that have failed to produce developmental outcomes remain much more fragile and unstable – again because commitment to them is instrumental and not principled. Thus, expectations for democracy to deliver tend to be rather high and unrealistic, which goes back to the issue raised in Section 1 about the problems of adopting a maximalist definition of democracy.

Characteristics of hybrid regimes

While there is considerable variation among hybrid regimes,[23] some general traits may be observed:[24]

- *Political participation and governmental accountability*: These regimes tend to be characterised by populist politics, unaccountable 'delegative'/strong-man leadership, and opaque decision-making processes. The resulting shallow political participation outside elections and weak governmental accountability lead to a sense of collective public frustration about what democracy can deliver and what can be achieved through formal political institutions.
- *Rules of the game*: As O'Donnell (1996) notes, in these types of regimes the rules of the game are contested, with formal and informal institutions coexisting in ways that are often not complementary. In short, there is no 'institutionalised uncertainty'. The rule of law, which is intended to establish formal rules and regulations *a priori* to order political interactions and make politics more transparent and predictable, is, at best, applied unevenly. This means that the equality of citizens before the law cannot be guaranteed. All of these practices and dynamics lead to the further de-institutionalisation of fragile democratic structures and to their ongoing deterioration.
- *Corruption and clientelism*: Clientelistic structures and high levels of corruption often persist in hybrid regimes, especially when citizens have few means of holding elites to account except during election times. Elections themselves can be a source of corruption, since election campaigning is expensive, and politicians often seek to raise funds or win votes in various illicit ways (e.g. through government-controlled procurement processes) (Whitehead, 2002). The civil service often continues to suffer from a mix of ethnic/regional and political clientelism – ranging from the creation of additional ministries to accommodate important support groups to the abuse of civil servants to rally support for incumbents during pre-election periods.
- *Popular expectations and state capacity*: State capacity remains persistently weak, but at the same time more actors demand to be included in the decision-making process and expect better services and enhanced state accountability. This dual dynamic reinforces the prospects for instability. The state may be overwhelmed by the new demands brought about by democratic pressures, and unable to respond adequately because it lacks the necessary institutional and administrative capacity, and even the legitimacy and credibility, to do so. As noted, the resulting disillusionment can be potentially destabilising. Many of the elections that took place in Latin America in 2006 also reflected this growing disillusionment with (incomplete) democracy and pointed to the resurgence of populist candidates in the region (Rocha Menocal, 2006).
- *Elite reversals:* In a number of cases, reversals have been induced by political elites rather than by pressures from below. A number of presidents in these incipient democracies in the developing world have sought to reverse the term limits imposed on them by amending the constitutions adopted in the 1990s.[25] In Russia, democratic reversals initiated by political elites have often been met with acquiescence from citizens. Political leaders have justified such reversals on the grounds that more authoritarian measures are needed to strengthen state

[23] For instance, Carothers (2002) makes a distinction between hybrid regimes characterised by 'feckless populism' (regimes where there is considerable pluralism and competitive electoral processes but where democracy remains shallow and troubled) and those characterised by 'dominant-power politics' (where there is some space for political competition but one grouping dominates the system so that there is little prospect for a real alternation of power).

[24] The following discussion on hybrid regimes draws, in part, on Fritz and Rocha Menocal (2006).

[25] While the attempt to do so was unsuccessful in Zambia, Kenya, Malawi and most recently Nigeria, the Presidents of Namibia, Uganda and Togo succeeded in changing the constitutions to allow themselves another term in office.

capacity. Thus, citizens in Russia have come to associate democratisation with disorder and lawlessness (Rose, 2001).

Based on this discussion about the emergence of hybrid regimes, the overall trend towards democratisation can be said to have both advantages and disadvantages. On the positive side, democratisation has addressed some of the problems of the previous political configurations. Even 'unfinished' transitions have opened up new opportunities for participation and for the alternation of power through formal institutions. This has helped to institutionalise leadership changes, a serious challenge under previous authoritarian regimes (van de Walle, 2001). However, it must also be acknowledged that hybrid regimes lose some of the *potential* advantages of authoritarianism[26] (e.g. concentration of decision-making powers, clear hierarchical structures), without fully acquiring the strengths of democratic regimes, such as effective accountability and checks and balances. Under such circumstances, clientelistic systems continue to thrive, because the potential authoritarian top-down control is not replaced by effective accountability mechanisms, and raised expectations often go unmet.

Finally, it is important to stress that democratisation does not happen in a vacuum. It occurs alongside several other important challenges such as the existence of relatively ineffective states and ongoing attempts to tackle state weakness; widespread corruption and anti-corruption campaigns;[27] and efforts to reduce poverty and promote growth (MDG and PRSP-related processes).[28]

Exogenous factors: The role of external influences and actors in democratic consolidation

For a long time, especially during the 1980s and 1990s, international actors involved in democratisation efforts tended to focus mainly on elections – that is, on the actual transition from authoritarian rule – and to pay significantly less attention to what would happen afterwards. This was in large part due to a tendency within the international community, discussed at the beginning of Section 2, to place considerable faith in the impact that elections would have by their very nature on broader democratisation processes (Carothers, 2002). Once countries held these transitional elections, they often slipped out of the international spotlight (as in Zambia, Kenya, and Peru during the 1990s). Many of the regimes that today may be considered 'hybrid' were those that learned quickly to hold multiparty elections in order to keep international pressures at bay but did not necessarily democratise in a more substantive way. Donors have begun to realise (some more than others) that the holding of elections alone will not suffice to promote democratisation efforts in a more profound and sustainable manner. As discussed in Section 3 of this review, they are now engaged in a much broader set of activities aimed at strengthening fragile democratic institutions.

Importantly, just as it was true during the process of democratic transition itself, in the efforts to promote deeper democratisation of hybrid regimes the international community certainly plays a role, but it will be a lot less likely to succeed in the absence of a domestic constituency committed to democratic reform. In terms of international influences, Levitsky and Way (2005) make a useful distinction between (Western) *leverage* – which includes such things as diplomatic pressure, political conditionality, and military intervention – and (Western) *linkages* – which refer to the density of a country's ties to the US, the European Union, and Western-led multilateral institutions. Leverage tends to be more coercive in quality, while linkage is a form of soft power. According to

[26] Note the emphasis. The statement should not in any way be interpreted as implying that authoritarianism by itself leads to better developmental outcomes, as witnessed by the dismal record of authoritarian regimes in countries ranging from Argentina in Latin America, to Burma in Asia, and to the Congo in Africa. On the other hand, the spectacular transformation of states like China and Vietnam has, in part, been made possible by the authoritarian nature of their respective political systems.

[27] An entire work package on corruption has been commissioned by Irish Aid and will be delivered in 2007.

[28] In Eastern Europe, multiple challenges were theorised as 'dual transitions', i.e. the simultaneous transformations of political and economic systems, compounded to different degrees by severe economic recessions. In sub-Saharan Africa, the changes to a more capitalist economic system largely occurred in the 1980s and 1990s; but the challenges created by 'chronic crises' of the state and of economic development (as well as other crises such as HIV/AIDS) are even more profound.

the authors, 'the mechanisms of leverage … [are] by themselves rarely sufficient to democratize … [hybrid regimes]. Rather, the more subtle and diffuse effects of linkage contribute … more consistently to democratization.' Linkage provides domestic actors with key incentives and ties to the international community that may prove critical in their efforts to fight for reforms.

Most countries experience a mixture of leverage and linkage in their relations with the international community. In general, however, leverage is an easier factor for the international community to manipulate, especially over the short term. Linkage is a structural variable that is mostly a product of geography, of such historical factors as colonialism and geostrategic alliances, and of long-term processes of social and economic integration. Thus, much of sub-Saharan Africa, the poorest and most aid-dependent region in the world, is a region of high leverage and low linkage, while Central Europe and the Americas have many more linkages to the West, by virtue of their proximity to the rest of Europe and the US, respectively. The Middle East, for its part, is an area where both leverage and linkage are low (Levitsky and Way, 2005).

An important point which tends to be neglected in studies and international discussions of democratisation in poor countries is the issue of weak stateness.[29] As noted above, there seems to be an implicit assumption that democratic transitions in the Third Wave are being built on the foundations of coherent, functioning states. Yet many of the countries stuck in incomplete democratisation processes are not only trying to democratise but are also more fundamentally grappling with the task of building functioning states. To the extent that international democracy assistance has considered the possibility of state-building as part of the democratisation process, it has too easily assumed that the fostering of democracy and state-building are one and the same goal (Carothers, 2002). However, this conflation of the state-building and democracy promotion agendas overlooks some inherent tensions. State-building requires the strengthening of state institutions and the solidifying/centralisation of state power, while democracy promotion calls for the substantial diffusion and redistribution of state power.

The following sub-section focuses on the concrete experiences of sub-Saharan Africa with democratisation processes in recent years. Section 3 provides a detailed analysis of different aspects of democracy assistance and attempts to help strengthen fragile democracies (including a discussion of available evaluations and lessons learned).

2.3 Democratic reforms on the African continent: Three trajectories

Box 3: Democratic reforms in Africa

In sub-Saharan Africa, few countries have remained untouched by the global surge of democracy starting in the late 1980s. But few of the countries that launched democratic institutions in the early 1990s have so far developed into institutionalised, consolidated democracies.

- Elections between more than one party or candidate appear routinised.
- But the political transitions of the early 1990s are characterised by a disturbing element of stability as former authoritarian leaders appear able to maintain power through competitive elections.
- The limited value of elections in terms of providing real choices to voters is linked to the weakness of institutions, such as political parties, parliaments and the judiciary.
- Yet, there are major differences in terms of democratic developments between countries on the African continent.
- This section distinguishes three trajectories: (i) countries that appear to be *en route* to democratic consolidation; (ii) countries where hybrid regimes have emerged; and (iii) reversed transitions and apparent collapse of political institutions.

[29] Villalon and VonDoepp's (2005) *The Fate of Africa's Democratic Experiments*, for example, makes almost no reference to issues of state capacity or economic development.

The Third Wave of democratisation reached the African shores in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Between 1989 and 1994, as a consequence of external and internal demand for democratic openings, 41 out of 47 countries in sub-Saharan Africa underwent significant political reform, including, in many cases, the first competitive elections in a generation (Bratton and van de Walle, 1994). In quantitative terms, the democratic transitions within the continent are impressive – between 1989 and 2000 sub-Saharan Africa witnessed 65 presidential elections involving more than one candidate. Over the same period, legislative elections involving at least two parties were held in at least 42 countries. Only the Democratic Republic of Congo (until 2006), Eritrea, Somalia, Swaziland and Uganda (until 2006) refrained from multiparty elections. Pointing to a routinisation of pluralist electoral processes, in the new millennium most of sub-Saharan Africa's new democracies have conducted their third and fourth multiparty elections.

However, compared with the early optimism with regard to what multiparty democracy was meant to accomplish for sub-Saharan Africa in terms of political accountability, economic development and peace, the current perception within the academic community and international aid circles is more mixed (Ihonvbere, 1998; Joseph, 1999; van de Walle, 2006). To a large extent, changing attitudes relate to the role of electoral institutions and the extent to which multiparty elections have had any real effect on decision-making within the continent. A striking feature of African political transitions is the ability of previously authoritarian rulers to maintain power through competitive elections. Of the 92 presidential elections conducted within the continent between 1990 and 2004, only 13 featured an electoral turnover (van de Walle, 2006). The 'big man' syndrome has often not been reversed by democratisation, and many autocrats-turned-democratically-elected-leaders have maintained extensive executive powers (Lindberg, 2006).

The limited expansion of real voter choice that elections have provided is linked to the weakness of democratic institutions. African parties are weakly institutionalised and characterised by poor organisational capacity. They often lack a structure that can penetrate the national territory, have dormant organisations between elections and few, if any, organisational resources (Kuenzi and Lambright, 2005; Rakner and Svåsand, 2004; Manning, 2005). While Eastern Europe and Latin America have witnessed the development of party structures relatively tied to functional interests in society (such as working class parties tied to trade unions, Christian parties linked to the Catholic churches, agricultural parties tied to farming interests) few such linkages between the party structure and interest groups can be found in Africa. Party formation remains based on personal ambitions and ethnic differences rather than issues (Burnell, 2001b). Similarly, outside South Africa, associations of civil society remain weakly developed. A nominally free press is often harassed in a number of ways and certain groups, notably key members of the executive branch and the military, operate above the law.[30] Civil society organisations and newspapers critical to the incumbent government often find themselves victims of government sanctions.[31]

Few African political systems have so far developed into institutionalised, consolidated democracies – where democratic institutions and rules have become 'the only game in town' (Linz and Stepan, 1996). Admittedly, attempts to classify the range of African regimes according to their levels of democratic development are fraught with problems of data, interpretation and short time series (Lindberg, 2006). Moreover, the democracy indices such as those of Freedom House are based on crude quantitative measures covering only a limited number of indicators of contestation. Available cross-national data tell us little about qualitative aspects of democratic developments such as the relationship between formal and informal institutions of government, between institutions of government both at the local and the national level, or the role of external actors in processes of democratisation. Below, we provide some qualitative assessments of democratic trajectories in sub-Saharan Africa. While acknowledging the huge variation in terms of democratic

[30] For example, in Uganda the accounts of the military and executive office are outside the realm of the auditor general (Wang and Rakner, 2005).
[31] In Zambia, NGOs and independent newspapers such as the Post that are critical to the MMD government have frequently been targeted by the Zambia Revenue Authority with extraordinary tax reviews and taxation (Rakner, 2003).

developments within the continent, we outline three broad 'types': i) regimes that appear to be consolidating their democratic institutions; ii) regimes that are 'stuck in transition' between outright authoritarian governments and institutionalised democracies; and iii) regimes where a gradual 'meltdown' or erosion of the quality of democracy and its institutions is witnessed.

2.3.1 Consolidating democracies in sub-Saharan Africa

As argued above, the expectation in the democratic literature in the early 1990s was that the transitions to democracy and regular elections over time would lead to qualitatively improved institutions and democratic processes; and that the new democratic institutions would increasingly enjoy local and international support. However, in sub-Saharan Africa, it is commonly observed that democracy has been consolidated in only a few countries, such as South Africa, Botswana and Mauritius. In a few other countries, changes in party leadership and political successions appear increasingly to be rule-based and routinised. This has provided a degree of political stability that also has positive effects on other aspects of governance, such as the investment climate and state capacity to deliver public services. Although this judgement may be contested, Ghana (Gyimah-Boadi, 2001; Lindberg, 2003), Mozambique (Manning, 2005) and Tanzania (Kelsall, 2003; Lawson and Rakner, 2005) may be placed in the category of consolidating democracies.

Tanzania represents a country where many of the institutional building blocks necessary for accountable government are in place and, for the most part, these are respected. Democratic rules and parliamentary processes are observed by stakeholders, a Public Finance Act is adhered to and relatively robust administrative structures have been developed at both the national and local levels. A recent study on levels of accountability in Tanzania (Lawson and Rakner, 2005) finds that formal rules are relevant *de facto*. Local governments operate as entities which manage resources and deliver services under the supervision of nationally and locally elected officials. These traits stand in contrast to those found in several neighbouring countries. Surprisingly perhaps, given the dominance of the party in government, vertical accountability to the electorate emerged as the most powerful check within the Tanzanian system at the national level, mediated in particular through the role of the majority party, *Chama Cha Mapinduzi,* the CCM.

After independence in 1961, and more particularly after the Arusha Declaration in 1967, President Nyerere stood at the forefront of the movement for *ujamaa* socialism, which nationalised the economy and followed this with top-down reforms of rural institutions. Arguably, the degree of organisation and central control necessary to even contemplate such social changes was remarkable and it has left its mark on the structure of state institutions and, perhaps more particularly, on the structure of the ruling party, CCM. An abiding characteristic of the socialist rule of government and bureaucracy under Nyerere was its ability to counteract what might otherwise have been strong political cleavages. When the multiparty system was adopted in 1992, the CCM was formally separated from government. But the transition took place under the guidance of the CCM and the political leadership of the ruling party controlled the process. The main opposition party is the Civic United Front (CUF) with its stronghold on Zanzibar.[32] Observers note that most opposition parties lack a comprehensive political programme, are conflict ridden and centred on individuals, have a narrow social base, and are urban biased (Ewald, 2002; Biddle et al., 2002). This strengthens the position and standing of the CCM. The incumbent party is considered to have been regenerated by the internal changes which the threat of electoral loss prompted and has largely retained its extensive network into rural areas (ibid.). Under the current system, the multiparty MPs are dependent on building a solid base of local following to win the election, which is different from the situation under the one-party system before 1992. The current system has considerably altered MPs' outlook on their representation of voters. The electorate now plays a decisive role in choosing contestants. Significantly, the National Executive Committee (NEC) of the CCM can still re-rank or nullify people's preferences, but it does so in a more transparent and

[32] Additional opposition parties include *Chama cha demokrasia na maendeleo* (Chadema), United Democratic Party, the National Convention for Constitutional Reform (NCCR-Mageuzi), and the Tanzania Labour Party (TLP).

careful manner (Biddle et al., 2002:19). Primary elections within the CCM are open and competitive. Nevertheless, the CCM party holds a dominant influence over the behaviour of MPs and it may be argued that the most effective checks on this power are traditions rather than formal rules with a legal and constitutional backing (Kelsall, 2003; Lawson and Rakner, 2005).

Thus, in Tanzania, like Botswana, South Africa and Mozambique we now witness democratic institutions increasingly being respected and routinised. Yet, so far, the dominant party has not been subjected to serious electoral contestation in any of these countries. Whether this factor represents a potential risk that could lead to democratic reversals is an issue that should be critically assessed when donors are developing country strategies, as the question must be related to the quality of other aspects of governance, such as the strength of civil society, level of ethnic/regional conflict, and alternative arenas of influence (the market, corporatist channels etc.).

2.3.2 Democratic processes 'stuck in transition'

The general finding for most of the Third Wave democratic transitions also holds for sub-Saharan Africa: a large number of countries that democratised in the early 1990s have remained in a 'grey zone' as hybrid regimes rather than institutionalised democracies or authoritarian systems. Kenya, Nigeria, Zambia, Uganda, Rwanda and many others are characterised by routinised electoral processes and formal democratic institutions. However, democratisation has not led to the institutionalisation of formal rules, and the uncertainty of rules is witnessed in particular before elections. Common among these hybrid regimes are poorly institutionalised and functioning party systems.

The case of Zambia is illustrative. Zambia experienced a change of leadership as a result of the founding elections in 1991. Since then, Zambia has held three multi-party electoral contests, therefore appearing to be 'on track' toward democratic consolidation. It seemed reasonable to assume that the first election under multi-party rule would be surrounded by controversy, while later elections would be less controversial as the voters, candidates and administrators gained experience with multi-party contests. However, after a brief period of euphoric optimism, by the mid-1990s Zambia's democratisation process had stagnated and maybe even reached a critical point in terms of continued stability. Institutional reforms have failed to produce influential 'watchdogs' and counter-forces against state malpractice and corruption. And while electoral democracy exists, pluralist constitutional democracy has not challenged the hegemony and increasingly more authoritarian practices witnessed within the MMD government. Rather, the 1990s saw a growing concentration of power in the executive office (Burnell, 2001b; Rakner, 2003; Rakner and Svåsand, 2004).

The case of the recent multiparty elections in Uganda provides another example. Praised by the international community as a success-case throughout the 1990s due to its positive record in terms of decentralisation, poverty reduction and HIV/AIDS policies, the country's democratic record has been more ambiguous.

In February 2006 Uganda conducted the first multi-party elections in the country since 1980 and marked the end of 20 years of 'no-party democracy'. The presidential two-term limit was lifted by way of a constitutional amendment, which enabled Museveni to stand as a candidate in the 2006 elections. The decision was controversial and drew harsh criticism from domestic as well as international quarters. At the same time, Uganda transformed its so-called movement system to a multi-party political system with the incumbent National Resistance Movement, NRM, formally assuming the character of a political party; NRM-O(rganisation). The opening of the political space triggered the formation of more than 30 parties, but the majority of these did not even nominate a single candidate for parliament, let alone for the presidency. The traditional parties, UPC (Uganda Peoples Congress and DP (Democratic Party), which had remained dormant during the two decades of no-party system, were re-established but were ridden by intra-party conflicts between different fractions aspiring to control the party, and they performed poorly in both the parliamentary

and presidential elections. During the previous elections and parliament, NRM had suffered from several defections. These politicians formed the FDC (Forum for Democratic Change) and mounted the most serious challenge to the incumbent party. The fact that the incumbent president was able to contest the 2006 elections for a third time may have contributed, in part, to the concentration of votes in two parties. However, the protracted transition also enabled the NRM to control the process.

The February 2006 elections illustrate that focusing primarily on polling and tallying of results gives a different understanding than considering the broader electoral process. The polling exercise on 23 February was generally peaceful, orderly and efficient. Security was adequate and few incidents of intimidation were reported.[33] But this is only one part of the story. While the 2006 elections were competitive from a formal perspective, the weak distinctions between the NRM structures and the state structures, and the resources enjoyed by the NRM, suggest that the hegemony of the NRM continued into the 2006 multiparty era. Broadening the perspective, it is evident that NRM dominance negatively affected the opposition parties and added to their internal problems. Similarly, the lifting of the presidential term limits and the lack of effective separation between state structures and resources and those of the NRM provided Museveni and NRM with unlimited campaign resources. The extensive use of the justice system by the executive to curb the opposition, and the willingness to compromise judicial independence and integrity to suit political goals, also clearly affected the electoral outcome. Similarly, the limitations placed on the independent media, as well as the military presence in the political arena meant that the elections took place on a radically skewed playing field (Gloppen et al., 2006).

2.3.3 Political meltdown

While the concept of hybrid regimes has received increasing attention in the literature on Africa's new democracies, a third trajectory of democratic development has so far been largely neglected. This category may be referred to as 'political meltdown' – a situation where the quality of political institutions erodes (rather than improves) over time. Political meltdown 'accumulates' when several key political institutions malfunction simultaneously. For different reasons, Ethiopia, Zimbabwe and Malawi may be placed in this category.

Ethiopia
The period after 1991 witnessed significant political institution-building and democratic reforms in Ethiopia (Lyons, 1996). However, the political process remained closely controlled by the ruling Tigray People's Liberation Front-Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (TPLF-EPRDF). The 2005 election process indicated a significant shift in voters' preferences towards the opposition parties and the May elections became the most contested of elections. The opposition parties claimed to have been denied election victory through rigging, and the government's refusal to allow any concessions to the opposition led to civic demonstrations that in turn were suppressed by police and special forces (Abbink, 2006). The elections triggered more than a year of civil unrest concerning the results and a sharp reversal in the process of democratisation that was initiated in 1991 (de Renzio, 2006). The shift towards authoritarianism during the course of the elections revealed that, when faced with the real threat of being ousted from power, the incumbent EPRDF was determined to stay in power by all means.

Zimbabwe
The political and economic crisis in Zimbabwe provides another example. This can be linked to the increasing repressive policies pursued by the ruling party, Zimbabwe African National Union (Patriotic Front) (ZANU PF) and by President Mubabe when they were faced with an electoral threat after two decades in power. The government's defeat in the 2000 referendum, where the ZANU-PF government's constitutional reform agenda was defeated by a powerful civic alliance, was followed by the emergence of a strong parliamentary opposition through Movement for

[33] The only major problem was the turning away of tens of thousands of voters who were not listed in the voters' register.

Democratic Change's (MDC) electoral gains in the 2000 parliamentary elections. These developments ignited a series of political interventions by ZANU PF, including a violent land occupation strategy led by war veterans, the restructuring of the judiciary and passing of legislation that increased the government's powers of repression, constant harassment of the independent press and the destabilisation of key civic associations such as the trade unions (Raftopoulos, 2002). According to one observer of the 2002 presidential elections, 'the ZANU PF deployed tactics whose sheer brutality and underhandedness were without precedent' (Makumbe, 2002: 87). In the period following the 2002 elections, Zimbabwe has experienced a near total economic collapse together with a dismantling of the institutions of restraint such as the courts and parliament. In addition, the independent media has been curbed by draconian laws.

The cases of Ethiopia and Zimbabwe show that real threats of being ousted from power through democratic elections can result in a 'meltdown' of democratic institutions and a reversion to authoritarian forms of leadership. The case of Malawi represents a different scenario where political contestation and excessive pluralism has resulted not in a reversal to the one-party rule of the former Banda regime, but a form of institutional void.[34]

Malawi

Pluralist democracy was reintroduced in Malawi in 1994. Since then, three presidential and parliamentary elections (1994, 1999, 2004) and one local government election (2000) have been held within a multiparty framework. However, across the elections, the institutions have declined and, as a result, the legitimacy of the electoral process in Malawi has been challenged. Linked to an inadequate electoral process, the party system has disintegrated. The first two multi-party elections (1994 and 1999) resulted in a three-party system, reflecting a regional distribution of support.[35] During the 2004 pre-election period Malawi witnessed a process of party fragmentation, involving new parties as well as the splitting up of established ones. Party fragmentation culminated when the United Democratic Front (UDF), after having won the presidency, fell out with President Mutharika and he went on to form a new party, the DPP (Democratic Progressive Party), drawing a majority of sitting MPs. In March 2006, local government elections had to be postponed (again) because key political parties had entirely depleted their resources in the process of positioning and intra-party strife, to the point of compromising their ability to perform core functions (Rakner et al., forthcoming).

The institution of parliament has witnessed similar decline. Until 2000, Malawi's Parliament did not have a functioning committee system and did not perform any oversight of the executive branch. Government funding only covered plenary meetings, leaving no funding for committee work. In the period after 2000, a variety of donors (with a variety of funding arrangements) facilitated committee meetings. But this did not produce a Malawi-owned programme that went beyond the various donors' agendas. Of the 13 committees at Parliament, the donors supported only 6, and each of the donors engaged in Parliament had a different agenda and form of engagement. The other committees did not meet, due to lack of funds (Rakner et al., 2004). The limited improvements in terms of parliamentary oversight between 2000 and 2004 have largely been derailed in the aftermath of the 2004 elections. As the number of parties increased, the 2004 elections produced a more fragmented parliament. This created fertile ground for horse-trading between parties and independents in their jockeying for positions. In October 2005, the opposition initiated impeachment proceedings against President Mutharika. Since then, the Parliament has ceased to function, as the President has refused to call it for sessions – thus avoiding the impeachment issue but at the same time undermining a key institution of government (Patel and Tostensen, 2005).

Although there are significant problems and also an uneven performance in the judicial branch, courts have played a significant and predominantly constructive role in Malawian politics since the

[34] Illustrating the problems of classifying weakly institutionalised democratic systems in Africa, analysts focusing on regime turn-over have characterised Malawi as an 'electoral autocracy-turned-democracy' (Lindberg, 2006: 153).

[35] AFORD (Alliance for Democracy) dominated in the North, the old state-carrying party, MCP (Malawi Congress Party), in the centre and UDF (United Democratic Front) in the South, the most populous region.

democratic transition of the mid-1990s. In the period between 1993 and 1996, the judiciary established itself as the primary custodian of the values of democracy. The courts have also increasingly acted as a safety valve, dissipating tension and preventing violence. Part of the explanation of the role of the courts in Malawi is the weakness of alternative institutions, reflected in the fact that courts are called on to decide on matters of parliamentary procedure, or party-internal disputes (Gloppen and Kanyongolo, 2004). Fortunately, the professional competence of (the few) Malawi judges, buttressed by the support of the churches and the donor community, has enabled the courts to maintain trust and to perform where other political institutions display signs of deep crisis.

2.4 Explaining democratic trajectories

Many of the political developments witnessed in sub-Saharan Africa over the past two decades are explained by the general challenges to democratic consolidation discussed in Section 2.2 above. However, three more specific factors help to explain the trajectories followed by the sub-Saharan African countries that opened for democratic elections in the early 1990s: i) the relationship between formal and informal institutions and the strength of the latter; ii) economic development and the strength of the private sector; and iii) the form and level of external support to the democratic processes.

2.4.1 The interplay between formal structures and informal power relations

In part, the failure of democratic consolidation as illustrated by the cases of Malawi, Ethiopia and Zimbabwe, as well as other, if less dramatic, hybrid regimes, can be found in the interplay between formal political structures and the informal power relations. Bratton and van de Walle (1994) argue that the distinctive political traditions of Africa's neopatrimonial states shaped the regime transitions that took place in the early 1990s. Beneath the appearance of democratisation, all the structural sources of authoritarianism persisted, and still persist today. Candidates elected or appointed to political or administrative office face a dual normative structure and conflicting expectations. The rational-legal norms embedded in formal rules regulating their office are often at odds with the expectations and moral pressures arising from their community, family or constituency, calling on them to provide opportunities and benefits that often go far beyond what is possible by legal means.[36] Failure to respond to these demands is likely to compromise the office holders' social (and moral) standing within their community (and also in many cases in their own eyes) and, at least in the case of politicians, also reduces their chances of re-election – thus creating strong incentives for nepotism and forms of more or less corrupt behaviour. As Booth et al. (2006) note, 'Malawi has a "neopatrimonial" state, where there is a framework of formal law and administration but the state is informally captured by patronage networks. The distribution of the spoils of office takes precedence over the formal functions of the state, severely limiting the ability of public officials to make policies in the general interest.'

All political systems are characterised by the interplay between formal and informal institutions. However, when informal institutions undermine the formal ones, as witnessed in the recent impeachment process in Malawi, it may be argued that processes geared towards strengthening and building the capacity of formal institutions may have little effect. The discussion above suggests that Tanzania may be moving in the direction of institutionalising its political system, as, increasingly, formal institutions define the political choices of stakeholders. The process of selecting CCM's presidential candidate in 2005 suggests that formal rules matter also in intense power struggles.

[36] See Hyden (2006) for an analysis of the interactions between formal institutions and what he refers to as the African 'economy of affection'.

2.4.2 Declining economies and weak private sectors

The general finding that structural factors may not be a determinant for democratic transitions but that the level of economic development has an important impact on the sustainability of democracy, is clearly an important element for understanding the low degree of democratic consolidation in Africa. The declining economies of many African nations, coupled with their weak private sectors, have meant that, in many cases, investing in a political career is the most realistic channel for upward mobility. In Malawi, the fact that a political position is the route to business opportunities (licences, contracts with the state and donors) has been a driving force in the fragmentation of the party system as well as in the commercialisation of Malawian politics; political parties have increasingly become mere vehicles for individual candidates to secure potentially lucrative positions. Hence, party cohesiveness lasts only as far as individual interests converge, as has repeatedly been demonstrated when the various party leaderships have attempted to enforce discipline in nomination processes, resulting in defections and loss of candidates who prefer to stand as independents. For individual candidates this is a rational response as they seek return on their often substantial investments.

This individual rationality creates a vicious circle. When political office becomes central to business opportunities, it hampers the development of a private-sector-based middle class that can serve as a countervailing force to self-seeking political behaviour. The most obvious example of a strong private sector functioning as a 'check' on government is private capital in South Africa. The many lucrative opportunities available in private business have meant that politics is not 'the only game in town', which opens the possibility of a business voice with some independence of government. Increasingly, analysts of Tanzania's political and economic development have pointed to the emerging private sector as an important political force. With the liberalisation of Tanzania's economy, business associations have grown in influence. A measure of their recognition is that they are now routinely consulted in pre-budget talks (Heilman and Lucas, 1997; Fjeldstad, 2003).

2.4.3 The role of external actors

In part, the limited democratic development witnessed on the African continent may be explained by the marked presence of international donor finance. As the next section describes in more detail, donor funding has been central in establishing/reforming and financing the institutions that we now see faltering in Malawi and Ethiopia, and to a lesser degree countries like Uganda, Kenya and Zambia. Often, donor financing has created situations where accountability to external actors far outweighs vertical accountability to 'the people'. The need for demonstrable and quick results has in some cases led donors to by-pass the very institutions they have advocated (and in some cases been instrumental in putting into place).

A bird's eye view of democratic experiences in sub-Saharan Africa suggests that, so far, institutional reforms have frequently failed to produce influential 'watchdogs' and counter-forces against state malpractice and corruption, as assumed in democratic theory. In the great majority of countries that implemented multiparty democracy in the early 1990s, democratic institutions, such as parliaments and courts with powers of judicial review, and institutions of restraint (human rights commissions, electoral commissions, ombudsmen and others) have provided only limited 'checks' on executive power. The paradox is that over the past decade considerable resources have been invested – from international donors as well as African citizens – to develop institutions capable of securing accountability and guarding against executive dominance and abuse of power (Wunsch, 2000). In the next section we discuss the experiences with democracy assistance to sub-Saharan Africa with comparative references to Latin America and Eastern Europe.

3. Democracy assistance: Lessons learned and remaining challenges

This section reviews the different forms that democracy assistance has taken over the past two decades. We examine five focuses of democracy promotion that are particularly important and/or prevalent among donors: i) elections, ii) political parties, iii) judicial reform, iv) civil society, and v) the media. For each form of democracy promotion, we ask:

- How is this form of assistance defined and why is it believed to be important?
- Who are the main actors in providing such assistance and who are the main recipients?
- What type of assistance has been provided in each of these areas?
- What lessons have been learned from such assistance and what are the remaining challenges?

The sections above give an overview of the key debates surrounding the concepts of democracy and democratisation that have emerged since the 1980s, drawing in particular on the vast scholarly literature. This section shifts the focus of attention towards donors and reviews experiences with international democracy assistance, that is, conscious, practical international efforts to encourage, support or influence democratic change and political reform in other countries (Bjørnlund, 2004: 9).[37]

3.1 Overview of actors and approaches

Democracy assistance itself is a broad and rapidly evolving field and, necessarily, our treatment of such international efforts must be selective. As a result, we have chosen to focus on five areas that we believe to be particularly critical to the task of building/strengthening incipient democratic regimes in the developing world, namely: i) elections, ii) political parties, iii) judicial reform, iv) civil society, and v) the media. For each of these areas we provide a summary of the main actors involved in such assistance and related debates, before evaluating each in more detail. The aim is to highlight emerging lessons from almost three decades of support to democratic processes in new and transitional democracies. Other components of the research programme on Good Governance, Aid Modalities and Poverty Reduction focus on donor initiatives that are in many ways deeply connected to the democracy-assistance agenda, including decentralisation and efforts to combat corruption. These topics are therefore not addressed in any great detail in this report.

3.1.1 US vs. European approaches to democracy assistance

As set out in the introduction, the main actors in democracy promotion are the US (through USAID and a range of organisations funded by it), and European bilateral donors, as well as the EU. The US is the largest single source of funding.

With the end of the Cold War, democracy promotion became an explicit goal for US development assistance and foreign policy, and the US has devoted substantial resources to aiding democratic transitions and building democratic institutions abroad. Since the late 1980s, both Democratic and Republican administrations have made the promotion of democracy an important part of their foreign aid. Broadly defined, approximately 7% of US foreign aid was budgeted for democracy promotion in the early parts of this millennium, excluding the nation-building operations undertaken in Afghanistan and Iraq (Carothers, 2004; Finkel et al., 2006). Some of this funding has been

[37] According to Burnell (2000: 9), a distinction should be made between democracy promotion and democracy assistance, as only the latter fully recognises that the primary motivation for democratisation must be locally driven (2000: 9). Nevertheless, in this section we will use the terms interchangeably to mean support to democratisation processes.

directed via USAID to NGOs such as the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), the Carter Center, and a number of centres affiliated with American universities. Scholars, particularly from law backgrounds, have been involved in the shaping and execution of US democracy promotion programmes to a much greater degree than has been the case in Europe (Burnell, 2000).

Some of the largest and most prolonged efforts of European democracy assistance have their origins in the German party foundations, or Stiftungen (Burnell, 2000: 36). By the 1990s these foundations, linked to German political parties, had representatives in more than 100 countries and had placed field officers in some of them for more than 30 years. Apart from the democracy assistance provided through the party foundations, the German Agency for Technical Co-operation (GTZ) has provided democracy assistance since the 1980s. In addition, the so-called like-minded donors (the Scandinavian countries, Canada and the Netherlands) introduced legislation and policy statements on the place of human rights in their aid programmes as far back as the 1970s. By the late 1980s, almost all European bilateral aid agencies had developed democracy-related aid strategies. Furthermore, in Europe, funding for democracy promotion is often also channelled, at least in part, through foreign ministries (where these are separate from development). In recent years, many European countries as well as Canada have set up or expanded institutions engaged in democracy promotion abroad (e.g. the Westminster Foundation in the UK was founded in 1992 and the Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy in 2000; the Parliamentary Centre in Canada was set up in 1968 to strengthen the capacity of Canadian legislatures, but has more recently begun to focus on parliamentary development in developing countries).

Box 4: German democracy assistance

Germany has provided democracy assistance since the 1970s, when the country's party foundations became active in Southern Europe (Portugal, Greece, Spain) after the collapse of authoritarian regimes in the region. The important role played by the party foundations has remained a marker of assistance. However, there are many other actors involved; and assistance is provided through bilateral as well as multilateral channels.

Other German bilateral agencies (GTZ, DED, KfW, InWent) have become more active in recent years around the promotion of the rule of law, civil society, democratic governance at local levels, media, and other areas. Some assistance to elections and election monitoring is provided by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Annual bilateral democratisation assistance runs to approximately €200 million (for 2004), which equals about 7% of total bilateral assistance.[38] At the multilateral level, Germany contributes to democratisation initiatives by the UN (UNDP, United Nations Democracy Fund), the EU, and International IDEA (in addition to funding for wider governance work by other multilateral channels such as OSCE, and the African Union/NEPAD, the World Bank and others).

German party foundations are active in a large number of developing countries (e.g. in 2004, the Friedrich Ebert Foundation had offices in 63 countries, and the Konrad Adenauer Foundation in 60 countries). Working mainly with political parties, parliaments, election commissions and the media, they emphasise the socio-economic model (social market economy) as part of their work; possibly because this is seen as having been an essential element for consolidating democracy in Germany after WWII.

Most evaluations are focused on the project level and evaluations are generally carried out by each implementing agency separately. Party foundations mostly carry out evaluations of their country programmes; in recent years, the BMZ has undertaken one broader evaluation on the 'Scope for and Limitations of Promoting Democracy and Good Governance' in four countries with 'difficult context conditions' (Ethiopia, Angola, Guatemala and Cambodia) (Kurtenbach and Weiland, 2004).

The EU has developed the promotion of democracy into one of the pillars of its relationship with other countries. The European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights was founded in 1994. The EU has also 'anchored' democracy promotion in its various programmes in support of

[38] This data is drawn from annual budgets provided by the BMZ, and information collected from party foundations and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The boundaries of democratisation assistance are necessarily 'fuzzy', for example, technical assistance for strengthening local governments may or may not contain explicit support for democratisation.

transitional and developing countries (Phare/TACIS for post-communist countries; ALA, MEDA, CARDS, EDF resources for ACP countries).[39] In 2001, the EU Commission put forth a range of proposals for the integration of human rights and democratisation issues into all aspects of EU policy decision-making and implementation, including trade and external assistance.[40]

3.1.2 Democracy promotion: For what?

With some variations, the main institutions promoting democracy support have concentrated their attention on three principal areas:

- *Electoral and political processes*, including assistance to electoral administration, election monitoring and, to a far lesser degree, support to political parties.
- *Institution-building*, including work on national constitutions and the promotion of the rule of law and support to the establishment of institutions of restraint, such as anti-corruption agencies and, more recently and modestly, parliaments.
- *Civil society*, where the principal focus has been on so-called issue-oriented NGOs. Civic education groups, media, labour unions and business associations have also received considerable support.

The menu of democracy-based aid programmes has evolved over the past two decades to include new elements, but assistance to electoral processes, political institutions and civil society has always remained at the core. Emphasis within these forms of assistance has shifted, however. In the 1980s (late 1980s for sub-Saharan Africa and Eastern Europe), democracy promotion was primarily directed towards electoral processes, most notably election monitoring. Later, electoral assistance also embraced administrative support to electoral processes. From the early 1980s for Latin America and the early 1990s onwards for sub-Saharan Africa and Eastern Europe, a substantial volume of assistance shifted to reform of the judiciary and other projects under the rubric of the ‘rule of law’, itself a key component of the broader ‘good governance’ agenda. There was a distinct increase in the emphasis on civil society from the mid 1990s. In the new millennium, democracy promotion has been increasingly linked to the MDGs and Poverty Reduction Strategy processes. This is especially true for multilateral aid agencies like the World Bank and the United Nations system, but support to electoral administration and monitoring, civil society and the judiciary continues to feature prominently in most bilateral aid budgets. The most recent innovation in the area of democratic assistance has been to pay greater attention to supporting political parties and parliaments.

Box 5: Democracy promotion: The Eastern European experience

The Eastern European experience of democracy promotion is mixed: democracy promotion in Central Eastern Europe (CEE)/the European Union accession countries[41] is considered a successful experience, but it has been much less successful in the countries of the former Soviet Union (Russia, Central Asia, South Caucasus, Moldova, Ukraine and Belarus).

Democratisation in CEE was triggered by the political liberalisation occurring in the Soviet Union. Starting in 1988/9, there was a marked internal drive across CEE towards democratic systems of government,

[39] ALA: Asia and Latin America; CARDS: for South-Eastern Europe; MEDA: North Africa and Middle East; EDF: European Development Fund for African, Caribbean and Pacific countries. These geographic instruments have changed since 2007 and have been replaced with the following: an instrument for pre-accession assistance (IPA), a European neighbourhood and partnership instrument (ENPI), and a development co-operation and economic co-operation instrument (DCI), which includes Asia and Latin America. Support to ACP countries continues to be provided through the EDF.

[40] For example, the EU’s role in promoting human rights and democracy in third countries (COM(2001) 252 (May 2001). See http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/human_rights/intro/index.htm.

[41] Comprising Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Slovakia; plus, in a broader sense, the other accession countries: Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovenia, as well as Bulgaria and Romania.

Box 5: cont'd

embraced both by elites and populations. Thus, the initial transition to democracy occurred before the arrival of large-scale external Western assistance. In 1992, the Phare Democracy Programme was set up (joined later on with the TACIS Democracy promotion programme). In June 1993, the EU defined the criteria for membership.[42] Accession then became a medium-term process. During this period, democracy assistance was geared towards democratic stabilisation and consolidation across multiple levels and issue areas. As a result, the EU helped to promote substantive democratisation of the entire state apparatus, not just formal democracy.

The accession process was primarily an 'elitist' affair (Pridham, 2006). However, arguably, the Phare Democracy Programme, which directed its financing predominantly at civil society organisations, provided a balance. The EU demanded and provided substantial assistance for reforms in the judicial sector, to curb corruption and ensure fiscal stability. Engagement with the judicial sector has been described as particularly relevant (ibid: 384). The imposition of demands has sometimes been criticised; but it was also often effective at achieving change in the face of status quo interests of particularistic elite groups. In May 2004, 8 transition countries acceded to the EU; while Bulgaria, Romania and several South-eastern European Countries are likely to follow in 2007 and beyond.

While democracy promotion in CEE has been regarded as successful, it has been more difficult to replicate this success in neighbouring areas of South-eastern Europe, countries of the former Soviet Union or the Mediterranean. The comparison with South-eastern Europe is particularly interesting because the EU has concentrated considerable effort there, and accession has emerged as an incentive (although much later than for the CEE countries). However, it may be argued that internal conditions were much less favourable in most countries. In Belarus, Ukraine, Russia, Moldova, the South Caucasus and in the Mediterranean, the EU has invested less; there has been no accession incentive, and far less financial, political and other engagement. At the same time, domestic conditions have been less favourable (Solingen, 2003; Knodt and Jünemann, 2005). In Ukraine and Russia in particular, the US has played a more dominant role in democracy promotion; with some notable success in Ukraine (Wilson, 2005), but potentially helping to provoke a backlash in Russia (Gershman and Allen, 2006). In Belarus, both EU and US efforts have not had a significant impact, reflecting the fact that, in (relatively) stable autocracies, it is often difficult for external actors to exert an influence through democracy promotion.

Democracy promotion in the Mediterranean became a goal with the start of the Barcelona Process (EU-Mediterranean partnership) in 1995.[43] Support has mainly focused on civil society, but in contrast to CEE and due to the absence of accession negotiations, the engagement with political and administrative elites has been far less intensive (thus reducing the degree of linkages as discussed in Section 1). A Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly was launched in 2003, uniting members of the European Parliament, members of parliament from EU member states, and from Mediterranean countries (240 in total).[44] EU democracy promotion in Mediterranean countries has been criticised for having achieved very little, and observers have argued that the EU has emphasised an interest in stability and security over democracy promotion, particularly post-2001 (Youngs, 2006).

What works? Impact assessments of EU democracy assistance

Democracy assistance to Central and Eastern Europe is regarded as successful, while democracy promotion elsewhere in Europe has been less so. The experience in South-eastern Europe indicates that domestic conditions play an important role in determining the degree of success, even in a situation of strong and relatively unified external engagement and incentives. However, detailed assessments of the EU's democracy assistance are limited. The EU commissioned three assessments of its democracy assistance to different geographic regions (Central and Eastern Europe, Mediterranean, Africa and Caribbean), which largely focused on EU programmes to support civil society rather than on the wider relationship and how it contributed to the promotion and consolidation of democracy. The evaluations tend to focus on the project level and on the quality of project implementation, rather than on meso- and macro-level impact.[45]

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[42] The so-called Copenhagen Criteria, which included stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights, a functioning market economy and the ability to take on the obligations of membership.

[43] http://ec.europa.eu/comm/external_relations/euromed/

[44] Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Israel, Lebanon, Morocco, the Palestinian Authority, Syria, Tunisia and Turkey. See http://www.europarl.europa.eu/intcoop/empa/home/default_en.htm

[45] http://ec.europa.eu/comm/europeaid/evaluation/evinfo/1997/951432_ev.pdf

Box 6: Democracy promotion in sub-Saharan Africa

More than any other region of the world, Africa's political transitions have been influenced by pressure for change formulated by external actors, most notably the international donor community. And while democracy promotion in both Eastern Europe and Latin America has been linked to the dual goals of political and economic liberalisation, political liberalisation has been the main emphasis of democracy assistance to sub-Saharan Africa. Linked to this, the main providers of democracy assistance to Africa have been bilateral donor agencies, and multilateral organisations have played a more marginal role.

By the early 1990s the international donor community had become an important advocate for pluralism in Africa. Linked to the new emphasis on political reform processes, donor assistance to this area expanded rapidly during this decade. Increasingly attempting to link political conditions to aid disbursement, nearly all bilateral donors insisted on the introduction of multi-party systems as a condition for aid. The increased support for democracy and human rights promotion by the donor community witnessed in the 1990s marked a shift in donor behaviour – from previously having assumed non-interference in other countries' political affairs (Kapur et al., 1997; Lancaster, 1997).

Arguably, the expectations of the donors were based on a simplistic pluralist model. By reintroducing democratic constitutions and multiparty systems of rule, interest groups were expected to be autonomous and able to freely channel their concerns to government. Furthermore, the financial assistance of international donors was expected to enhance the capacity of organisation in terms of staff and lobbying. In the new millennium, a sense of donor fatigue has become evident with respect to conditionality instruments to support democratic developments, as donors were increasingly confronted with experiences of democratic reversals or stalled democratic transitions. Above all, the experiences with democracy promotion have indicated that local ownership of the democratic processes remains a key challenge. Arguably, in the 1990s democratisation came to mean, first and foremost, what donors wanted it to be. This finding relates to a real dilemma faced by the donor community: while trying to promote ownership, they have at the same time been playing a too proactive role and, thus, risked undermining local ownership.

Lack of attention to the social, economic, historical and local context in which democracy promotion is to take place has been particularly marked on the African continent. Excessively weak institutions and economies have meant that, in many instances, democracy promotion has created a 'democracy industry' witnessed by capital-based civil society associations that have weak ties to any constituency groups, and have often been established by talented individuals who have left state institutions for better paid jobs in donor-funded NGOs. Political processes, elections, election monitoring and party politics represent a window of opportunity for most citizens to take part in the 'democracy industry' and few votes are free in African elections. This commercialisation of politics witnessed in the past decade in sub-Saharan Africa is closely linked to international democracy promotion initiatives and funds.

The paradox of international development assistance to sub-Saharan Africa is that assistance has been geared towards strengthening the institutions of accountability – the electoral channel, legislature, the judicial system, special institutions of constraint and local government. Nevertheless, to date, donor assistance and domestic constituencies have not been able to stem the continued and, in some instances, increasing executive dominance over political processes in sub-Saharan Africa's new democracies. While donors are spending resources on creating political checks and balances, it appears that continued aid disbursements enable the same governments to maintain a strong degree of top-down control based on patronage politics (van de Walle, 2001).

3.1.3 Measuring the effects of democracy assistance

Overall, international actors have invested substantially in promoting democratic developments around the globe by enhancing the resources, skills, techniques, capabilities and ideas of civil society associations, the mass media, the judiciary and electoral commissions in many of the incipient democratic regimes in the developing world. However, knowledge about the long-term effects of democracy assistance remains limited.[46] Donor agencies have begun to evaluate their

[46] Some bilateral agencies have conducted evaluations of their overall governance aid, such as Danida (1999a; b; c). The human rights and governance arm of Irish Aid was evaluated in 2002 (CMI, 2002). By far the most ambitious effort to assess the impact of democracy assistance has been undertaken by USAID. See

democracy promotion projects but only rarely has the resulting knowledge been compiled into retrospective learning exercises. With a few notable exceptions, the academic community has not stepped in to fill this gap and democracy promotion is poorly represented in scholarly titles.[47]

One reason for the dearth of accessible knowledge is the numerous challenges involved in evaluating democracy promotion. In particular, it is difficult to attribute success or failure to a particular democracy promotion effort, given that (i) the general impact of these programmes depends on a host of other internal and external influences, as well as wider democracy promotion and, more generally, good governance initiatives; (ii) the effects of democracy programmes may not be fully apparent for years; (iii) democratic processes are interlinked with other social, economic, political and historical processes and conditions; and (iv) quantitative indicators can only capture this reality to a limited extent. Nevertheless, we note with concern that as the 'menu' of democracy assistance has evolved and often adapted to new challenges and past mistakes, efforts to share knowledge of best practices and lessons are few and partial. While it is challenging the impact of external donors in such a field, attempts to learn lessons have certainly remained 'below potential' thus far.

3.2 Forms of democracy assistance

3.2.1 Electoral assistance

Elections have played a major role in the democratic transitions witnessed in the past two decades, and free and fair elections have become a requirement for the international legitimacy of any government (Bjørnlund, 2004). As a result, the conduct of elections in new democracies has attracted significant international as well as domestic attention. The most visible expression of this attention is the financial support from the international donor community to improve the organisational capacity of institutions involved in the electoral process, the presence of election observers on election day, and the public (international) acceptance – or condemnation – of how the election has been conducted (Burnell, 2000). In both political and financial terms, support to elections has probably been the most prominent sector of democracy assistance.[48]

Electoral assistance may be defined as the technical or material support given to the electoral process. This covers a wide variety of activities including: support and advice on electoral systems, laws and regulations, and assistance to establish legal electoral frameworks; general input to the national electoral commission and support for electoral procedures, such as party and voter registration, balloting, vote counting and dispute resolution; support to election administration and the training of election administrators; support to civil society in areas such as voter education; and the training of local observers and media monitors. The political complement to the administrative electoral assistance is *election observation,* defined as 'the purposeful gathering of information regarding an electoral process, and the making of informed judgments on the conduct of such processes on the basis of the information gathered by persons who are not inherently authorised to intervene in the process' (IDEA, 1997: 10).

Who is involved in electoral assistance?
Of the bilateral governments, USAID has had the most prolonged and consistent programme of electoral support. The Democracy and Governance Office of USAID also supports regional programmes of electoral assistance through NGOs such as the International Foundation for Election Systems (IFES), the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) and the American party institutions, the National Democratic Institute (NDI) and the International Republican Institute (IRI).

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http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/democracy_and_governance/. However, this evaluation focuses on the overall impact of funding levels only, and does not explore the impact of the programme content.

[47] Notable exceptions are Carothers (2000, 2004); Carothers and Ottaway (2003); Burnell (2000); Bjørnlund (2004).

[48] Given the limitations with data, the relative weight of different aspects of democracy promotion in funding terms cannot be assessed with certainty.

However, most other bilateral donors also support electoral processes as part of their democracy and governance support.

In addition to their direct support, a number of donor countries have established organisations to promote democracy and provide democracy assistance, such as the British Westminster Foundation, the Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy and political party foundations in Sweden, Norway, France and Austria. In 1995, 14 established and newly democratic countries set up a new multilateral organisation focusing exclusively on democracy assistance, the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA). Over the past ten years, IDEA has become a major NGO dedicated to assembling information, gathering expertise and developing and transferring skills in electoral assistance.

Government support to electoral processes is also channelled through multilateral organisations such as UNDP, the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the Organisation of American States (OAS), the Commonwealth (former British colonies), the African Union (AU), and other organisations that have made the promotion of elections and democracy a priority. The EU is another major actor in terms of providing assistance for electoral processes, in particular to independent electoral commissions, in the granting of material, technical and legal assistance in preparing for elections, and taking measures to promote the participation of specific groups and the training of election observers. Since 1997, the EU has organised observer missions to new and transitional democracies.

Thus, starting in the late 1980s, norms, standards, guidelines and best-practice models have been endorsed by international institutions, bilateral governments and international NGOs. Numerous field reports from agencies such as UNDP, IFES and the Electoral Institute of Southern Africa (EISA) have contributed to the development of a standard for free and fair elections.

Election monitoring

International monitoring of elections became an important phenomenon in the Cold War era and, as one of the oldest forms of democracy assistance, is generally accepted around the world.[49] Between 1989 and 2002, international election observers were present for 86% of national elections in 95 newly democratic or semi-authoritarian countries. Election observation has been particularly widespread in Eastern and Central Europe and the former Soviet Union, Latin America and Africa.

Election observation describes a range of activities focused on making controversial elections more acceptable or exposing their flaws. Three main forms of election observation can be distinguished:

- International observation of transitional or other exceptional elections conducted by missions sent by governments, multilateral organisations or international NGOs.
- Domestic monitoring by national organisations, especially non-partisan NGOs.
- International supervision by intergovernmental organisations of post-conflict elections. Here elections are conducted/supervised by internationals, not just observed.

Negative evaluations of election assistance programmes have often been related to the large amount of funding allocated to election monitoring exercises; particularly in the first part of the 1990s, election monitoring consumed a major proportion of the funding available for democracy assistance. Early experiences found that the all too pragmatic and sometimes compromising attitude of observers and donor agencies purporting to stand for democracy and the rule of law put the rules and principles on hold in favour of certain expected economic and political gains (Abbink and Hesseling, 2000: 9). Furthermore, it was found that election monitoring was carried out with little sensitivity to context. Elections were monitored on the basis of whether they were free and

[49] Election monitoring is contested in some cases, such as in Russia where the authorities have reacted negatively to OSCE election monitoring in CIS countries and have set up separate measures.

fair, without paying attention to the underlying structural biases (Geisler, 1993; Bjørnlund, 2004).[50] Based on these findings, evaluations suggest that donor governments should reconsider the usefulness of sending short-term election observers. Recent emphasis on long-term observer missions (arriving two months before elections in order to inform short-term observers) have in part addressed this criticism.

It has also been noted that the mandates, interests and constraints of election monitoring groups tend to reflect the national interest of sponsoring countries. By the late 1990s, it had become an international norm that established and emerging democracies must welcome international observers. However, election monitoring is not a precise science and the information on which observer statements are based suffers from sampling problems and unknown levels of precision. Despite the emerging agreement on norms and standards, it is very difficult, if not impossible, to arrive at a set of international norms for satisfactory and legitimate elections that can easily be translated into more practical standards for assessing real world elections.

Assistance to the administration of electoral processes

Support to electoral administration embraces a range of activities including support to legislative reform, technical equipment, organisation and logistics, voter registration, and monitoring and observation. Large parts of overall support have been devoted to building the capacity of electoral commissions through funding, training, technical support and the provision of equipment.

The general picture emerging from evaluations is that this support has improved conditions for the holding of free and fair elections, increasing the legitimacy of electoral processes and results (Lopez-Pintor, 2000). However, this has led to concern about the sustainability of electoral processes. Largely donor-organised elections in post-conflict and transitional states have proven to be very expensive. As a result, some observers argue that assistance to democratic processes has established unsustainable models of how elections should be conducted, including sophisticated voter registration systems, transparent ballot boxes and ballots printed abroad. According to Ottaway and Chung (1999), the problem arises as donors have often been generous in their support for first elections, but the responsibility for future ones falls on governments with small and over-stretched budgets.

Lessons and remaining challenges

As argued in Section 2, experiences with democratic reform and external assistance in the 1990s have made it clear that elections do not equate with democracy. However, recognition of the fallacy of electoralism should not lead to underestimation of the importance of elections to democratisation (Elklit, 1999). Successful elections allow important steps to be made towards democratisation, just as flawed elections can lead to significant set-backs.

The example of Mozambique (Box 7) suggests, moreover, that electoral assistance has evolved and improved over time, undergoing major changes since the advent of democracy assistance in the late 1980s. Due to its perceived importance and the development of international norms and standards, election assistance has become an area where donor co-operation and co-ordination has been relatively well developed. It is also an area where donors have been able to make funds available in a timely fashion. Election observation has also become more sophisticated, and is often based on universally-accepted standards with more emphasis placed on long-term observer missions. Democracy assistance to improve the administration of elections has developed into a sub-field of its own. Donor co-ordination, the development of basket-funding mechanisms and learning from regionally- and internationally-acknowledged best practices has improved assistance to electoral processes.

[50] The 2000 elections in Zimbabwe, where attacks on the opposition took place long before the election day which was itself relatively peaceful, illustrate this point.

Box 7: Mozambique

The experiences with Mozambique provide an illustration of the improvements and changes over time within the field of electoral assistance.[51] The international community invested an estimated $150 million in five multiparty elections in Mozambique between 1994 and 2004. Through various aid modalities, 17 donors contributed $59 m. to implement the first multiparty elections in 1994. Sixty-eight experts from 26 countries were employed to support electoral administration at the central and provisional level. In addition, USAID financed the training of party monitors and separate funding was provided for 3,000 international observers. Relatively low levels of support were provided to emerging Mozambican civil society associations interested in election monitoring and civic education. In 1998, a concerted effort at donor co-ordination resulted in the European Commission (EC) and nine other donors providing $17.7 m. through the UNDP for the organisation of local elections in 33 municipalities. The EC and UNDP employed the same funding modality and jointly mobilised $30 m. for the second general elections in 1999. In addition, funding by USAID and the UK Department for International Development (DFID) enabled a long-term observer mission by the Carter Center and further amounts were invested in the training of national observers. The 1999 elections were observed by an EC as well as a regionally-based mission from the Electoral Institute of Southern Africa (EISA). The support continued until after the elections to help consolidate the experience that had been gained and to assist in the computerisation of the voter register. Electoral assistance to the third general elections in 2004 was funded in one package, or 'basket fund'. The EU provided $18 m. in extra budgetary support and the UNDP functioned as the international antenna within election administration. By now, technical assistance was almost absent from the budget. Reflecting a shifting emphasis, the 2004 elections were observed by 2,000 national observers, 20,000 party agents and 200 international observers.

Nevertheless, a number of challenges remain. Despite the establishment of permanent national electoral commissions to administer the electoral process, analyses of electoral administration, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, suggest that only limited institutional learning has taken place in many countries from one election to the next (Bratton and Posner, 1999; Rakner and Svåsand, 2004; 2005). This is partly related to the fact that key aspects of electoral management are 'outsourced' to international firms delivering election-based services, which has hindered institutional learning.[52] Another problem, perhaps, is that too much is expected of elections and election monitoring; for instance, the international community has often looked to elections to spur processes of nation-building after violent conflicts, such as those in Angola, Iraq or Bosnia.

Remaining challenges for election assistance include the following:

- *Elections are not one-day events*. Voter registration, the unfolding of election campaigns and the resolution of disputes in the aftermath of the announcement of results all form part of the electoral process. International actors still place too much emphasis on election mechanisms and polling-day activities.
- *Domestic, long-term observation is where the emphasis should lie*. First-generation elections, or the first multiparty elections, have given way to more complex scenarios where problems of democratic consolidation and the enhancement of the rule of law are significant factors. These developments necessitate greater emphasis on domestic, long-term observation and better, closer co-operation between international and local observer groups.
- *Broaden perspective to local elections.* Election observation has tended to focus primarily on national elections. However, in order to consolidate democracy, free and fair elections are necessary at all levels.
- *Build institutions*. Technical assistance has increased capacity. However, a problem remains in that capacity rests with individuals and not institutions. More emphasis should be given to the promotion of regional and continental arrangements and locally-developed guidelines.

[51] This account is based on Tollenaere (2006).

[52] To our knowledge, the level of engagement in electoral processes from international firms has not been properly evaluated. Preliminary analyses suggest that 10-15 international firms are major suppliers of equipment and technical assistance to all phases of the electoral process. The selection of firms and costs involved are seldom properly accounted for.

3.2.2 Assistance to political parties

Political parties are in a state of crisis in the majority of newly-established democracies. Parties are weak, poorly institutionalised and thoroughly discredited in the eyes of the electorate. However, it is difficult to imagine a democracy that can function without them. Political parties are meant to be key institutional channels through which citizen interests are aggregated and represented (Carothers, 2006).[53]

Considering their importance in democratic processes, it is interesting to note that donors involved in democracy assistance have only very recently started to engage with political parties. In the past, this type of assistance has been viewed as too political or sensitive (Hallhag, 2006;[54] Schoofs and de Zeeuw, 2005). International assistance is not an altogether new undertaking, however, as political party foundations have provided assistance to party developments in new democracies for some time (Hallhag, 2006). Nevertheless, it is true that, to date, the funds allocated to political party support have been limited,[55] particularly in comparison to other areas within the democratic governance agenda.

Who provides political party assistance?

Political party assistance has involved three main categories of actors: political party foundations and other international NGOs, bilateral and multilateral donors and NGOs, and educational institutions in the recipient countries. Of these, political party foundations have been the most active. The work of German political party foundations, especially the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung and the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, is particularly well known and dates back to the 1960s. These *Stiftungen* (six in total) are well funded and organised, and are responsible for the lion's share of political party assistance among European NGOs (Schoofs and de Zeeuw, 2004). In the US, some of the most active organisations include the NDI, the IRI and the NED.

The traditional approach of the German *Stiftungen* in particular is to be connected to a political party, seeking to promote the party's interest and core democratic values. They therefore tend to target parties that share their own ideology in countries where they are already involved. A more recent trend in Europe is to set up multi-party foundations such as the UK's Westminster Foundation[56] and the Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (NIMD). The NIMD describes itself as 'an institute *of* political parties *for* political parties' and has a mandate to be strictly non-partisan and inclusive. US-based political party institutes have partisan roots and tend to promote values based on these. Their practical work often embraces a multiparty approach, though they have, at times, worked principally with a specific party or coalition.[57]

Aside from these political party foundations, other international NGOs have begun providing political party assistance from a multiparty perspective over the past few years. Perhaps the most prominent of these is International IDEA, which launched a programme to support political parties in 2004. NGOs and educational institutions in recipient countries are mostly involved in the area of political party assistance through partnerships with international organisations. They are mainly involved in activities such as hosting/co-sponsoring meetings and workshops, leading or facilitating training sessions, and providing essential local knowledge.

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[53] Carothers' recent contribution on political parties and party assistance in developing and transition countries is one of the few in-depth treatments of the subject, however interest may be emerging on both sides of the Atlantic.

[54] Interview with the authors, 21 June 2006.

[55] Quantifying this type of aid remains a difficult undertaking, however, because of the absence of comprehensive data that are comparative across regions and organisations (Schoofs and de Zeeuw, 2005).

[56] See http://www.wfd.org

[57] According to Carothers (2004): 'In Russia and some other countries in the former Soviet Union, both IRI and the National Democratic Institute (NDI) have engaged in partisan aid aimed at helping opposition parties trying to challenge rulers or ruling parties. And in some cases, such as in Serbia in the late 1990s and Belarus in 2000, party aid [has been] part of relatively explicit US government-funded efforts to unseat disliked … leaders.'

In contrast to political party foundations, bilateral and multilateral donors are relatively new to the area of political party assistance. Only limited amounts of funding have been allocated to this area of democracy assistance compared to others. The main bilateral donors openly involved in political party support are the US (USAID) and the UK (FCO and DFID), who both maintain the policy to support representative, multi-party systems through assistance to all parties in countries deemed appropriately democratic.[58] However, it should be borne in mind that, in the US and particularly the UK, the funds allocated for political party assistance remain limited (Burnell, 2004). USAID channels most of its aid in this area through NDI, IRI and NED, while the UK's Foreign and Commonwealth Office funds the Westminster Foundation for Democracy. Other bilateral donors include Finland, the Netherlands (which funds the NIMD), Sweden and Spain.

Multilateral donors that provide assistance to political parties include the EU, the Organisation of American States (which has party aid programmes in Central America and sponsors the regional Political Party Forum) and UNDP (which is working with political parties as part of its efforts to promote processes of national dialogue).

In terms of the geographic distribution of political party assistance, approximately half of total donor assistance goes to Central and Eastern Europe (Albania, Bulgaria, Romania, Serbia, etc.). Countries in the former Soviet Union (Georgia and Ukraine, for example), Latin America (particularly the Andean region) and sub-Saharan Africa (Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, etc.) have received lesser but still significant amounts of aid. On the other hand, little to no assistance at all has gone to the Middle East and North Africa (Schoofs and de Zeeuw, 2004).

Types of political party assistance and experiences

In very broad terms, the main goal of international assistance to political parties is to reform and strengthen them to promote multiparty democracy. In working towards this, donors have adopted a series of strategies that can be roughly categorised as follows:

- Supporting parties to build/strengthen basic party organisation (with activities such as building party membership, grassroots outreach, developing political platforms, supporting internal democracy and gender diversity).
- Strengthening the capacity of parties to participate in electoral campaigning (e.g. voter mobilisation, candidate selection and training, fundraising and media work).
- Working with parties in national legislatures to become more effective in proposing and passing new legislation, exercising oversight over the executive and reaching out to their constituencies (e.g. negotiation and coalition-building tasks, and training in drafting legislation).
- Strengthening the party system as a whole by improving the institutional environment.
- Promoting inter-party dialogue and multiparty collaboration at both the regional and the national levels (e.g. NDI's work with the Council of Asian Liberals and Democrats launched in 2001 (CALD, 2002); Multiparty Democracy/UNDP's 2002 project to promote inter-party dialogue in Guatemala and encourage consensus on a shared national agenda for peace; the work of the NIMD and the Westminster Foundation for Democracy).
- Promoting stronger linkages between political parties and civil society.
- Financial support to parties, primarily by bilateral and multilateral agencies rather than by political party foundations.

The core methods of political party support that donors have adopted to pursue these strategies seem to conform to the same pattern. These include short-term training programmes for party leaders and functionaries; workshops and/or seminars led by international experts; technical assistance to facilitate constitutional and legal reforms, establish regulatory agencies such as

[58] USAID country offices, for example, need to apply for an exemption at headquarters if, in their opinion, a particular political party should not be receiving assistance because it is not deemed democratic. Some parties may be excluded on the basis that they are anti-democratic, have not ruled out the use of violence to accomplish their goals, are narrowly based on ethnic or religious lines, etc.

election commissions, reform election financing mechanisms, and engage in policy-making, etc.; exchange programmes; advisory work with party leaders; and research and polling (opinion polls and policy-oriented research).

Lessons and remaining challenges

Analysts have found that current donor approaches suffer from several shortcomings. Many observers argue that political party assistance is highly prescriptive, based as it is on an idealised, Western conception of what political parties ought to look like. Beyond setting unrealistic expectations, this 'fixation' on what a good political party is does not allow enough room for adjustment to the local context within which particular parties operate. According to Carothers (2004), '[a] striking feature that emerges from a cross-regional look at political party aid is … the fact that party aid programs look basically the same on the ground all over the world, no matter how different the political contexts and traditions of the places where the programs are carried out'.

This tendency among donors to be prescriptive has led many of the intended beneficiaries of political party assistance to feel very little ownership of the process. Perhaps not surprisingly, the impression among those meant to be 'trained' is often that experts coming from the outside do not know the local context and are eager to import lessons from elsewhere that may have little relevance/applicability to the national/local reality. Training sessions also lack follow-up, and are often supply- rather than demand-driven. Such approaches tend to focus on the short-term and are not conducive to the promotion of party capacity (Carothers, 2004).

In addition, many donors (including both bilateral and multilateral agencies) are still reluctant to recognise that political party assistance (and democracy assistance more broadly) is inherently political. This is not a simple issue. Most donors work with a broad spectrum of political parties and claim to be non-partisan in their approach. But, in reality, much political party assistance is partisan. Donors often justify partisan aid aimed at benefiting one particular party over others by arguing that their assistance seeks to strengthen democratic political forces working against non-democratic rulers or parties. An example is the party aid efforts directed against Slobodan Milosevic in Serbia. On the other hand, donors sometimes oppose certain leaders or parties because they happen to dislike them or are suspicious of their values and platforms (Randall, forthcoming). This is probably inevitable, but in that case donors need to be more open about such biases, otherwise political party assistance could be perceived as political manipulation (Krishna, 2004). Donors need to be very clear about their objectives when supporting political parties, as well as upfront about the political dimensions of this kind of assistance and the dangers of partisanship.

Finally, very little work has been done in the area of evaluation and impact assessment of political party assistance. In particular, there is a dearth of systematic, cross-regional studies analysing the effectiveness of such aid. There are no clear standards or benchmarks against which to measure either party development or donors' performance in extending support to parties and aiding the party system (Burnell, 2004). Bilateral and multilateral donors working in this area rarely co-ordinate their efforts (Hallhag, pers. comm.), and as a result, there is little information-sharing among donors and little opportunity for learning.

Remaining challenges for improved party assistance include:

- *Recognising the political nature of party assistance.* As part of this effort, donors need to be clear and upfront about their objectives and their criteria for supporting some political parties and not others.
- *Co-ordinating donor actions and taking a long-term view.* Support to political parties may not involve large amounts of funding, however, long-term engagement is essential. The international community needs to address the imbalance between assistance to political parties and assistance to civil society. So far, most of the funds have gone to the latter, with the effect of devaluing and marginalising institutions that are essential to representative democracy (Doherty, 2002). Donors should not think in terms of *either/or*, but rather

develop strategies that work to strengthen both civil society organisations and political parties.
- *Focusing on the local party leadership*. Awareness of the local context is essential before determining what approach to take. This is especially true for training, and local experts should be employed in assistance programmes rather than relying on outsiders (Krishna, 2004). Efforts to strengthen political parties should be carried out by party leaders themselves and not the international community.
- *Increasing local ownership through co-operation with NGOs*. Channelling most party assistance through intermediary organisations (NGOs, consulting firms etc.) in order to create some distance between foreign governments and political parties may increase local ownership (ibid.).
- *Knowledge of local context is necessary*. Donors need to avoid prescriptive solutions and become much more aware/knowledgeable of the political-economy factors that limit the effectiveness of political party assistance. The political context in which the parties are operating may make reforms difficult to implement (e.g. lack of funding, the exigencies placed by an image-driven environment where personality and style matter more than substance, poor standing among the population, etc.) and an uncommitted party leadership can hinder attempts at reform (e.g. parties built on personalistic ties suffer from a strong leader syndrome, where the leader does not want to let go of power).
- *Learning from experience*. More and better evaluation of international political party assistance needs to be produced to learn from past experiences and tailor future assistance programmes. Academic work on political parties in the developing world is almost non-existent (Randall, forthcoming) and there is a great need to support research and comparative studies on the subject of political party development in different contexts.

3.2.3 Justice sector assistance

Creating a viable judiciary and strengthening its democratic functions have constituted a major part of international democracy assistance for the past two decades. A common purpose of the various efforts has been to make national legal systems function in a more efficient and fair manner. Justice sector reform is also embarked upon in order to improve the overall ability of the system to provide access to justice for the general population, and to increase the capacity of the judiciary to fulfil a constraining role vis-à-vis other organs of state, and in particular the executive. Justice sector reforms encompass judicial reform, i.e. reforms to improve the functioning of a country's legal system, and hereunder law reforms, access to justice programmes, administrative reform and legal education (Skaar et al., 2004). Justice sector reform also encompasses the police and penal institutions and, in many instances, security (military and intelligence institutions) are included.[59] Overall, it may be argued that four main motivations explain donor assistance to the justice sector: (i) to facilitate economic development; (ii) to protect human rights and provide access to justice; (iii) to secure law and order; and (iv) to secure democratic accountability, good governance and the integrity of the political process. (ibid: 4) Interventions have generally sought to improve the accessibility and legitimacy of the judicial system and address problems of responsiveness, capability and lack of independence.

Substantial funds have been devoted to the strengthening of legal systems, improving access, and improving security through judicial sector reform over the past two decades. In the late 1980s, a new wave of judicial reform started coinciding with the parallel processes of economic and political liberalisation. A key challenge facing new and democratically-elected governments after long periods of authoritarianism or civil war was to re-establish rule of law. Assistance to the judiciary

[59] The rule of law can be defined as a system where the laws are public knowledge, clear in meaning, and apply equally to everyone. It enshrines and upholds the political and civil liberties that have gained status as universal rights over the last half-century (Carothers, 2003).

has therefore been a major component of both multilateral and bilateral aid programmes since the early 1990s.[60]

A greater number of donors have been involved in justice sector assistance since the 1990s. The main multilateral donors have been the UNDP, World Bank, regional development banks and the European Union/Commission. In addition, a range of governmental organisations and NGOs have been involved. The main donors in terms of range of activities and programmes include USAID, DFID and GTZ.

Justice sector reforms in Eastern Europe and Latin America

In Latin America, renewed international interest in the justice sector starting in the 1980s was closely linked to the process of economic liberalisation. An efficient and transparent judiciary was considered necessary in order to enhance economic development and encourage foreign investments. The new support was also linked to a parallel international trend of political liberalisation. Thus, in the 1990s the justice sector in Latin America was characterised by a multitude of reform agendas, however, in terms of volume of assistance, the largest share was devoted to law reform. In addition, court reform and reform of judicial administration has been emphasised (Salas, 2001; Skaar et al., 2004). Some reviews point to lack of ownership and willingness to implement reform as a major obstacle to justice sector reform in the region (Carothers, 2003). In the Southern Cone (Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Uruguay), however, national actors have arguably driven judicial reforms and international organisations have been invited to provide financial assistance to nationally-defined agendas (Skaar et al., 2004).

According to Carothers (2003), the most active region for justice sector reform has been Eastern Europe. In the early 1990s assistance in the reform of the rule of law expanded rapidly, becoming a major category of international aid. As in Latin America, justice sector assistance was motivated both by the processes of economic and political liberalisation. For Eastern European countries, US and German bilateral assistance, as well as the World Bank and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, have been the main actors. However, almost every bilateral donor, and a wide range of multilateral organisations and foundations, have developed specific programmes to assist developing countries in the effort to reform their justice sectors (Mendelsohn and Glenn, 2000). Assessing experiences both in Eastern Europe and Latin America, Carothers finds that co-ordination among the donor agencies has been poor and that turf battles are common (ibid.). The tendency to adopt laws from another system, without adaptation to the local legal culture or substantial involvement of stakeholders, is noted in most of the judicial reform efforts in Eastern Europe (Channell, 2005). The reform efforts have also been insufficiently funded and of limited duration. Finally, narrow diagnoses to legal shortcomings have produced projects that ignore systemic problems (Channell, 2005: 4).

Assistance to the justice sector in sub-Saharan Africa

Whereas electoral assistance reforms were the focal point of donor assistance in the first half of the 1990s, judicial, constitutional and legislative assistance became a rapidly growing area of development assistance in the second half of the 1990s.[61] Donor support for judicial sector reform changed focus with the end of the Cold War and the growing trend toward multiparty democracy across the continent in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Thus, for Africa, aid to the judicial sector forms part of the wider good governance agenda. The process of economic liberalisation seems to have been less of a driving force for judicial reform. Early activities began as a late response to apartheid in South Africa and to increased political repression in Rwanda in the years prior to the 1994 genocide. The rule of law was seen as essential for establishing a stable, predictable environment conforming to formal rules rather than patronage. Beyond addressing national legal

[60] International assistance to judicial reform is often divided into two main periods: 1960-70 and 1990 to date. The period of almost 20 years in between saw little judicial reform and international donors were largely absent from the field. USAID and the Ford Foundation dominated the field of law development assistance in the first period.

[61] The Danish evaluation found that 83% of grants to justice, constitution and legislation over the period 1990-8 were allocated after 1995 (DANIDA, 1999: v).

frameworks, the range of institutional development activities funded by donors focused on increasing effectiveness and included improving physical infrastructure, supporting legal and judicial training, making legal information accessible or upgrading management systems in ministries.

Donor assistance to justice sector reform in sub-Saharan Africa has increased significantly over the past 10 years, from an estimated $17.7 m. in 1994 to over $110 m. in 2002.[62] As total aid commitments to the region remained stable during the period, this represents a shift in priorities towards legal and judicial reform, reflecting both an acknowledgement of Africa-specific developments – notably democratisation and the prevalence of violent conflicts – as well as an increasing interest in justice sector work globally (ibid). However, international aid to judicial reform has taken place on a much smaller scale in sub-Saharan Africa than in Latin America and Eastern Europe. The main international donors are bilateral government agencies (GTZ, DFID, USAID, CIDA, Sida), multilateral organisations with the UNDP and EU in the forefront, and a large number of NGOs. However, in comparison to Latin America, where multinational donors and regional banks have been the main actors, bilateral donors have been most active in assisting judicial reform in sub-Saharan Africa (Skaar et al., 2004). The recent attention given by some donors to the accessibility of justice, respect for human rights and the accountability of institutions to the public – rather than the role of formal judicial institutions in establishing and protecting formal democratic institutions – is explained by the new emphasis on poverty reduction and, more specifically, the Millennium Development Goals.

Box 8: Uganda

Uganda provides an example of an evolving donor response in the area of justice sector reform. In the Masaka District pilot mechanisms for inter-agency co-ordination between local criminal justice agencies – such as monthly meetings of a 'case management committee' – have yielded low-cost improvements, which have inspired reform in other districts. A range of Ugandan institutions came together in 1999 to create a Justice Law and Order Sector (JLOS) with a joint strategy and investment plan approved as part of the country's Poverty Eradication Action Plan. Donor assistance has been provided with an aim to respect national leadership by providing funding through the national budget or by funding only projects that fall within the national strategy.

Lessons and remaining challenges

After nearly two decades of assistance to justice sector reform, a number of lessons have emerged. Evaluations from Latin America in particular point to the fact that the concept of judicial reform has become accepted as public policy and that, in many instances, governments have increased their budgets for the judiciary. Judicial independence has increased, especially in the Southern Cone countries. Improved training of judges and court personnel is also reported (Sarles, 2001). Comparing experiences with judicial reform in Latin America and sub-Saharan Africa, Skaar et al. (2004) note that while Latin American judges have been central 'drivers' of the judicial reform process, the reform of the judiciary in sub-Saharan Africa has been externally driven.

Remaining challenges include:

- *Recognising the political aspect of judicial sector reform:* Two decades of justice sector assistance suggest the need to go beyond technical solutions and strive to understand the context for the intended reforms. In many African countries, executives remain dominant. Justice sector reform aimed at increasing judicial impartiality can pose a threat to the powerful. Donors often fail to account for the political aspects of the reform process.
- *Ensuring donor co-ordination*: One challenge in deciding how best to use aid lies in the sheer complexity of justice systems, with a multitude of institutions from both state and civil society keen to preserve their independence and benefit individually from resources that may become available. Donor co-ordination is essential for successful justice sector reform

[62] See Piron, http://www.justiceinitiative.org/db/resource2/fs/?file_id=15274

in order to avoid duplication of efforts, and to make sure that all relevant parts of the legal chain are targeted to avoid unintended side effects of particular reform efforts.

- *Avoid blueprints:* A general lesson across regions appears to be that efforts to strengthen basic legal institutions have proven slow and difficult. Moreover, the assistance has been characterised by a tendency for bringing in 'blueprints' of judicial reforms developed in Western countries, which again has hindered the development of local ownership. Reform projects have often over-estimated the capacity of states to absorb new policies and institutions. Despite the fact that significant amounts of aid have been granted for writing laws and improving professional standards of courts, some observers hold that the effects are questionable.[63]
- *Securing sustainable interventions:* There are serious difficulties involved in transplanting formal laws and institutions to societies and sectors where law has not played any major role in their organisation. An important lesson from justice reform programmes across the developing world is that institutional reform takes time. Too often, donor projects are designed with a 2 to 3-year timeframe.[64]
- *Involving non-state actors and informal institutions:* National ownership of reform is often understood to refer to government ownership and the large amounts of funding required to make significant changes often leads to state-centric assistance. Yet, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, formal state institutions may not be the most relevant institutions in terms of justice provision.[65]
- *Adopting a person-centred perspective:* Priority should be given to the needs of the poor, vulnerable and marginalised groups by enhancing their access to justice. Support to state institutions should be set within this context.[66]

3.2.4 Assistance to civil society

In the period 1990-5, programmes to support civil society[67] mushroomed in all regions as donors, with USAID at the forefront, began to actively support the idea that citizen activism holds the key to democratisation efforts. This new emphasis on civil society can be explained by two leading factors. The first was disappointment with other types of democracy assistance and with the failure of transitional democracies to function any better than their authoritarian counterparts or to become consolidated despite the introduction of multiparty elections. The second was a desire among donors to promote a model of development based on a considerable reduction in the size and

[63] According to Carothers (1998: 11): 'Aid providers have helped rewrite laws around the globe, but they have discovered that the mere enactment of laws accomplishes little without considerable investments in changing the conditions for implementation and enforcement'.

[64] The problem is illustrated by European and British support for an initiative to address the backlog in homicide cases in Malawi. Court backlogs had increased considerably following the 1995 introduction of a jury trial system. In 1999, donors covered the costs of accommodation, allowances and transport for all those involved in tackling the problem – judicial, police and prosecution personnel, legal representatives, jury members, witnesses and a doctor. This support was to be temporary, but by 2003 an independent evaluation identified an excessive reliance on external resources. Government funding for processing homicide cases had effectively ceased and the donor initiative had not, by then, led to the creation of an improved and sustainable mechanism for continuity after the project's end (Piron, 2005).

[65] Reportedly, more than 80% of disputes in Africa are resolved through non-state systems, such as chiefs. Malawi, for example, has a predominantly rural population of 9 million, yet there are only about 300 lawyers, mostly in the urban centres, and only 9 of the country's magistrates have had professional training. By contrast, there are at least 24,000 customary justice forums (Piron, 2005).

[66] The Malawi Safety, Security and Access to Justice Programme (MaSSAJ) that started in 2000 and the Nigeria Access to Justice Programme approved in 2001 both emphasise sector-wide policies and co-ordination, paying attention to research and the perspective of the poor. UNDP's 'Access to Justice For All' (2002) also prioritises equal access to justice. Similarly, the World Bank has adopted access to justice as one of three strategic objectives in addition to legal and judicial reform. In programming terms, the World Bank's new approach is illustrated by grants in 14 African countries to support gender-responsive legal reform projects.

[67] The concept of civil society is contested but it is generally agreed that it constitutes the intermediary associational realm between state and family, populated by organisations that are separate from the state, enjoy autonomy in relation to the state and are formed on a voluntary basis by members of the society to protect their interests or values (White, 1994: 379). While there is a tendency among donors to equate civil society with NGOs, it is essential to remember that they are not one and the same, and that 'civil society' is broader.

reach of the state in poor countries[68] and the realisation that public-sector reform is time-consuming, expensive and highly complex.

Related to the first factor, the concept of civil society became extremely popular among donors with the growing prominence of scholarly studies arguing that 'social capital' – or the dense networks of associational life that bound communities together and promote norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness – was the missing link in making democracy work.[69] As for the second factor, in a context of considerable donor antagonism towards what were perceived as over-bloated, inefficient states, civil society provided an alternative, ideologically appealing form of international assistance. In addition, with significant reductions in aid budgets, support to civil society was also thought to be a 'more economical' form of assistance and an area where results could be achieved with modest grants (Carothers and Ottaway, 2000). Democracy assistance to civil society has further remained attractive to donors on the basis that, in their view, it is non-partisan and does not entail any undue intervention in domestic political processes.

Funding to civil society assistance peaked in the late 1990s and, related to this, a number of evaluations and scholarly articles emerged debating the effects of democracy assistance to civil society. From a position of unprecedented popularity, democracy assistance became subject to considerable criticism. Many researchers began to question the legitimacy and effectiveness of NGOs in terms of democracy promotion (Edwards and Hulme, 1995; Jenkins, 2001; Howell and Pearce, 2001; Foley and Edwards, 1996; van Rooy, 1998). Increasingly, it was pointed out that this form of civil society support, and the types of NGOs it had created, had only had limited success in forging links between government and the grassroots level. Over the past decade, donors have also begun to question the wisdom of marginalising the state in favour of supporting civil society as a parallel structure (Fritz and Rocha Menocal, 2006). The new emphasis among donors is to encourage state and civil society actors to work together in building a political system that is more responsive, accountable and broadly representative; the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) process, discussed in greater detail below, is a leading example of such an approach.

Who provides civil society assistance?

Donors have provided financial support to a multitude of civil society associations in the developing world in the belief that they have a role in strengthening democracy. This takes the form of capacity-building assistance and grants channelled through in-country missions or intermediaries (international NGOs, political foundations, churches, trade unions etc.) for projects, organisational development, training, workshops, research documentation and advocacy work. In addition, most have developed civil society programmes, but with varying degrees of financial significance. Four sets of donors are active in the field: (i) bilateral agencies; (ii) multilateral bodies (e.g., the EC, UNDP and World Bank); (iii) international foundations (e.g., the Ford and Open Society Foundations) and US and German political foundations; and (iv) northern NGOs (e.g., Oxfam, Care and Save the Children).

From the mid-1990s, civil society support became a priority for most donors funding democracy promotion. Total spending by international aid organisations reached $4 billion in 1995; support from USAID alone more than tripled in the period 1991-8, increasing from $56.1 to $181.7 million (Carothers, 2000).[70] In addition to direct support channelled through USAID, a host of NGOs are involved in distributing US government funds, such as the NED, the NDI, the IRI, and the IFES. Democracy assistance provided through the German party foundations (in particular the Konrad

[68] This was the basis of the free-market reforms embodied in the 'Washington Consensus' of the 1980s and 1990s.

[69] One of the leading academic studies on the subject is Putnam's *Making Democracy Work* (1993), in which the author seeks to explain why democracy works better in the north of Italy than it does in the south, and identifies different levels of social capital as the leading cause. While Putnam's work gained a lot of currency in international assistance circles, it has also been criticised on numerous fronts. Among other weaknesses in his argument, Putnam never mentions, let alone explains, why fascism rose in Italy's 'civic' and 'more virtuous' north.

[70] Linked to US foreign involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan, USAID's Democracy and Governance programme has been restructured in recent years towards a greater focus on reconstruction. Most notably, USAID's budget for civil society support was cut by 60% between 2004 and 2006 (see http://www.usaid.gov/policy/budget).

Adenauer and Friedrich Ebert Stiftungen) form another important international presence in many developing countries. Other bilateral donors, such as the Scandinavians, also fund a range of civil society associations as part of their support to human rights and good governance.

Phase 1: The mushrooming of non-governmental associations

Throughout the developing world, the number of (pro-democracy) NGOs mushroomed as a direct consequence of civil society assistance programmes. As argued by Ottaway and Carothers, '[i]f success is measured by the number of NGOs formed in the late 1990s, civil society assistance to Africa has been extremely successful' (2000: 98). In many instances, the infusion of donor assistance helped to strengthen civil society organisations in countries with already strong civic traditions and comparatively rich networks of associational life. The civil society organisations that fought against authoritarian rule in Latin America (for example The Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo in Argentina), as well as civil society networks fighting for democracy, transparency and accountability in countries like the Philippines and Kenya, are all good examples. However, in many other cases, international assistance was instrumental in creating the first truly independent voluntary associations, and therefore a new form of civil society, following decades of authoritarian rule. As discussed above, donors considered NGOs attractive because they performed many of the same roles as political parties (such as representing interests, building participation and checking the power of the state) but ostensibly in a non-partisan way.

However, donor support during this period faced a number of criticisms. Firstly, critics argued that donors tended to reduce the concept of civil society to a depoliticised technical tool (Jenkins, 2001; Robinson and Friedman, 2005). Secondly, during this first phase of support donors relied on a rather limited definition of civil society, equating it with Western-style advocacy groups or NGOs and leading them to concentrate their assistance on a narrow set of organisations. In particular, organisations that form an important part of civil society in most advanced democracies, such as sports clubs, cultural associations and religious associations, have been absent from most programmes (Carothers and Ottaway, 2000). Thirdly, in many instances, the views of NGOs that have emerged as a response to democracy promotion programmes reflect donors' views of democracy, both in their immediate goals and in the means they use to pursue them. Fourthly, many of the NGOs favoured by democracy assistance programmes have a small membership and therefore lack a mandate from a wider constituency, putting both their sustainability and representativeness in doubt. Finally, there is evidence that donor assistance can actually militate against grassroots participation because the NGOs it helps to bring about are perceived as depoliticised, too closely aligned with donor service delivery agendas, too dependent on external funding, and out of touch with the grassroots (Howell and Pearce, 2001). Taken together, these factors meant that donors often focused on particular types of social organisation (urban-based and poorly rooted in society, top-down rather than grassroots, trustee rather than representative organisations and heavily reliant on external funding for their continued existence) and, as a result, bypassed other significant agents of social and political change.

Phase 2: Promoting countervailing forces

While much of the previous funding continued, towards the end of the 1990s donor support to civil society organisations became more explicitly political. Assistance to democracy advocacy groups was seen as a means of supporting democratic processes without directly interfering in internal policy debates. Starting in the Eastern European countries of Slovakia and Croatia, donors focused on associations whose specific purpose was to have authoritarian leaders voted out of office. Associations specialising in civic education and election monitoring were also increasingly earmarked for support. In addition to these groups, in sub-Saharan Africa, support was given to umbrella networks of civil society organisations consisting of women's organisations and churches etc., formed for specific constitutional projects.[71]

[71] Funding to the Oasis Forum in Zambia, which led the civil society uprising in 2001 against Chiluba's attempt to alter the constitution to allow himself a third term in office, illustrates specific donor funding to overtly political ambitions of civil society. Similar funding was provided to civil society groups campaigning against the Moi regime in Kenya and the third-term campaign of Muluzi in Malawi in 2004.

Most evaluations conclude that the organisational resource capacity of civil society has increased due to external assistance. In many instances, economic, organisational and moral support of international donors provides the basic guarantee for a continued autonomous civil society and opposition. Both Eastern European and sub-Saharan African experiences show that civic education groups have had a major impact on the fairness of electoral processes and the increase in electoral participation. The question remains as to whether this form of donor assistance represents a direct interference in political processes, an issue that has given rise to heated debates between governments, the donor community and civil society. NGO activities, such as the promotion of human rights and monitoring elections, are viewed with suspicion by developing-country governments and in some countries (for example, Ethiopia, Zambia, Malawi and Zimbabwe) such NGOs have been subject to government harassment. Furthermore, close linkages to the donor community have made it very difficult for these associations to build productive relationships with government. The fact that changing aid policy affects the power relationship between the government and civil society is an issue that is seldom reflected in evaluations of democracy assistance.

The Millennium Challenge: Broadening the perspective on civil society

Over the past decade, the donor community has been increasingly confronted by studies suggesting that the modalities of official development assistance (ODA) adopted in the 1980s – in particular structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) – have failed to produce intended developmental outcomes. In an effort to enhance democratic accountability and aid effectiveness, a vast majority of multilateral and bilateral donors has embraced a new paradigm of 'effective aid' that is founded on a discourse of country-led ownership, partnership and co-responsibility (World Bank, 1998). As a step in this direction, the blueprint structural adjustment policies and conditionalities characteristic of the Washington Consensus have been ostensibly superseded by a 'new' approach to development, embodied in the PRSP process. Introduced in the wake of the international initiative on Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC), PRSPs are intended to be prepared by national governments through a participatory process involving civil society and development partners.[72] They represent, in part, an attempt by the World Bank and the IMF to base their decisions on nationally-owned strategies, and a key aim is for NGOs to monitor the implementation of the poverty reduction programmes, thereby holding governments to account. An increasing number of countries have been encouraged to draft their own PRSP (Rocha Menocal and Rogerson, 2006).

A central question is whether the role of civil society in PRSPs can be said to have contributed to strengthening accountability mechanisms at the national and local levels. The evidence thus far appears to be mixed. On the positive side, according to a recent study of the participation of NGOs in PRSPs, small, local and intermediate NGOs have engaged in information-sharing and awareness-raising at the local level (Driscoll et al., 2004), whereas, large, national NGOs based in the capital and other urban areas have participated in consultations about the policy content of the PRSPs. Many such NGOs have acquired new skills, forged networks with like-minded organisations, and improved their access to government circles. Studies of the process of formulating PRSPs in Zambia and Tanzania suggest that a new accountability relationship between NGOs, the administrative arm of government (Ministry of Finance primarily) and the international donor community has been formed (Gould, 2005).

However, while PRSPs are intended to be drafted in collaboration with multiple stakeholders, their participatory nature cannot be taken for granted, and it is not always clear that all actors have the same capacity to engage. Many civil society organisations in the South have expressed that their input is often marginalised. Debapriya Bhattacharya of the Centre for Policy Dialogue in Bangladesh, for example, has spoken about a 'participation deficit' among key stakeholders in the PRS process (Rocha Menocal and Rogerson, 2006). Zie Gariyo of the Uganda Debt Network

[72] The World Bank and the IMF originally used the PRSPs as the basis to grant low-income countries access to debt relief and later to concessional funding. Most other donors have since given their full support to the PRS process and offered their own grants to recipients under the same principle.

illustrates this in an analysis of the PRSP experience in Uganda, contending that 'most civil society organisations and institutions lack capacity to engage donors and policy planners in meaningful dialogue about policy issues. Both at national and local levels this is still a problem. The danger therefore is that CSOs might end up endorsing positions for which they have little knowledge' (ibid.). A recent study on the PRSP processes in both Bolivia and Zambia echoes these perceptions, arguing that fundamental improvements to PRSs are required if they are to become the mechanism for poor people to both influence policy processes and hold their governments (as well as donors) accountable for their actions (Tembo, 2005).

It is also clear that international NGOs (INGOs) have taken on the most prominent role in the new political realities formed by the PRSPs (Florini, 2000), and those with local branches/partner institutions in the South have adopted something of a sub-contracting role. They also fulfil key roles themselves where national civil society has been weak or where an authoritarian government has allowed only limited independence to local NGOs.

This role of INGOs raises new issues about the basis for their legitimacy. Do they have a right to represent poor peoples' interests in national policy processes? To whom are they accountable? What are the implications of being representative for their own internal governance and organisational structures? There are no straightforward or easy answers to these questions. While it is undoubtedly true that INGOs have made important contributions to democratisation efforts in the developing world, it is also worth considering whether the presence of these (relatively) large international NGOs may have had an adverse affect on the capacity and sustainability of home-grown NGOs, which tend to be much smaller and lack the resources to compete with their international counterparts (for funding, skilled personnel, policy influence, etc.).[73] It is important for (official) donors to be aware of these potential tensions given their strong emphasis on INGO financing as a means of supporting democratisation.[74]

The emphasis that PRSPs place on civil society participation also highlights one of the problems raised in the previous section on assistance to political parties. Thus far, political parties have not been included in the preparation of PRSPs, and legislatures have, for the most part, been bypassed in the process of establishing national priorities. This marginalisation of political parties and the legislature is not necessarily a healthy development and could actually undermine efforts to strengthen democratic governance. The choice should not be *either* civil society *or* political parties and/or the legislature, but rather how *all* of these institutions can be further strengthened so that government becomes more accountable and transparent in its actions.

Lessons and remaining challenges

- *Civil society assistance continues to support urban groups.* Arguably, after the initial interest in a very narrow type of advocacy and civil society groups, donors have broadened the scope of their programmes with the new millennium. Democracy support to civil society now reaches NGOs whose advocacy is geared towards both social and economic issues as well as specifically political ones. However, while the support to civil society suggests a broadened agenda and institutional learning, democracy support programmes have continued to be heavily biased towards urban-based advocacy and civic education groups.
- *Sustainability remains a concern*. While it is relatively easy – and cheap – to set up an NGO, establishing an association that speaks on behalf of a certain constituency and has an impact on policy formulation is far more time-consuming and takes long-term commitment. Donor assistance has succeeded in changing the organisational landscape of many countries. It is less clear whether democracy assistance has succeeded in stimulating the emergence and/or further development of an active and vibrant home-grown civil

[73] This is certainly a view that has been widely expressed by Southern-based NGOs in terms of their ability/desire to get involved in issues relating to how the international aid system should be reformed to make international assistance more effective (see Rocha and Rogerson, 2006).

[74] We thank Bill Morton of the North-South Institute for his comments on this issue.

society. Advocacy NGOs are usually completely dependent on donor funds and their sustainability depends on continued donor support and presence. As demonstrated by the experience with PRSPs, INGOs are usually better placed than domestic ones in terms of acquiring a voice and influencing policy processes, which again may disadvantage home-grown civic organisations.

- *External actors and funds shape power relations.* Civil society in the developing world is highly susceptible to external influences, both in terms of funding and of defining goals and roles for what constitutes 'proper' civic associations. Particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, it is now generally recognised that the donor community (including bilateral and multilateral agencies as well as INGOs) is in fact part of the domestic political process, together with domestic governments and a myriad of civil society associations. This is closely linked to the issue of sustainability of home-grown civic groups raised above, and should be considered carefully when designing a democracy assistance strategy.
- *A declining emphasis on capacity-building is observed*. As support to civil society has moved from the initial phase of establishing NGOs, an increasing trend has been observed among donor agencies towards acting instrumentally to help civil society groups achieve specific purposes. Linkages to the donor community agenda may be increased.
- *Long-term support and local sustainability should be emphasised*. Two decades of democracy support suggest that there is a need to develop forms of civil society assistance that can enable domestic NGOs to become sustainable. This again will involve democracy assistance coming to terms with the realities of associational life in the specific country context.
- *Attention should be given to issues of internal democracy*. In order to increase the accountability of civil society groups receiving democracy assistance, more emphasis should be given to locally-based interest groups and links between membership/constituencies and leadership. Internal democracy and diversity in both local and international NGOs should be emphasised.
- *Strengthening links between civil society and political parties*. As was highlighted previously, both civil society and political parties have important and legitimate roles to play in a democratic/democratising political system. This suggests that the international donor community should give greater consideration to the possible linkages between civil society and political parties. To reiterate, donors should not think in terms of *either/or*, but rather develop strategies that work to strengthen both civil society organisations and political parties.

3.2.5 Assistance to media

Assistance to free, reliable and independent media has become an integral part of democracy assistance programmes, especially since the end of the Cold War.[75] Increased donor attention and support for the media since the 1990s has also coincided with technological advances that have enabled the media (especially electronic media) to reach even the most remote places. While no precise data are available, analysts have estimated that the international community spends between $600 million and $1 billion a year on media assistance projects (Becker and Vlad, 2005; Hume, 2004).

Who provides assistance to the media?

Bilateral agencies constitute the major source of funding for media development. According to the World Bank, there are 26 donor countries involved in this kind of assistance, including all 22 members of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the OECD. Among them, USAID has provided the most significant financial support, totalling more than $260 million in media assistance over the past decade. Other prominent bilateral donors include CIDA, DANIDA, DFID, and Sida (Kumar, 2006).

[75] 'Reliable' meaning journalism that is accurate, impartial, and socially responsible.

Among multilateral agencies, the EC is the largest donor. Others include the UN (which includes a media initiative in almost all of its interventions in what it defines as 'transition countries', including fragile states such as Cambodia in 1992-3), UNESCO, the Council of Europe, and the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) (Becker and Vlad, 2005). The World Bank is also becoming an increasingly big player in this field (Kumar, 2006).

In addition, a plethora of foundations and international NGOs, mostly based in North America, Europe and Japan, are involved in media assistance. Foundations tend to provide funding for short- and long-term training of journalists, exchange programmes, and international seminars and workshops. Some of the most well-known include the Ford Foundation, the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, the MacArthur Foundation, the Rockefeller Foundation and the Soros Foundation Network (including the Open University) in the United States, and the Friedrich Ebert, Friedrich Naumann, and Konrad Adenauer Stiftungen in Germany. As for international NGOs, some, like the London-based Article 19, seek to promote media freedom through legal advice and advocacy. Others, such as the French-based Rapporteurs sans Frontières, the Belgium-based International Federation of Journalists, and the US-based Committee to Protect Journalists work to defend the rights of journalists and news organisations, fight censorship and offer educational and training programmes. In addition, many universities, particularly in the US and Europe, have established media centres to undertake training and educational programmes.

Geographical distribution and types of media assistance

During the 1980s, most media assistance was targeted at Latin America. However, with the end of the Cold War, donors shifted their attention towards the Balkans, Eastern Europe and Eurasia, while still supporting media projects in Central America and Southern Africa. More recently, donors have begun to move away from the former communist block to support media efforts in other regions, including Asia, Africa (e.g. Burundi, Congo, and Liberia) and the Middle East, which has become a priority since the advent of the war on terror and subsequent donor efforts to promote democracy there (Kumar, 2006).

In broad terms, the goal of international media assistance is to develop an indigenous media sector that is free, reliable, editorially and financially independent, and professional so that it can act as a 'watchdog' and uphold democratic principles. In order to work towards this goal, donors have adopted a series of strategies: [76]

- Journalism training (short- and long-term) and education. This represents the most significant focus of media assistance, with the aim of improving professional standards and editorial content.
- Support for the establishment of free and independent media outlets (newspapers, TV, radio stations). This area constitutes the second-largest financial commitment by donors with support including the provision of equipment and financial resources for start-up costs, and the privatisation of state agencies.
- Training in professional ethics, accountability and professionalism.
- Material assistance to help build the infrastructure needed for media independence, such as printing presses and transmission facilities, as well as the development of internet sites and capability.
- Assistance and advice in building the legal and regulatory framework for media operation and legal defence. Activities on this front include revising existing laws, training lawyers, judges and legislators in media law, providing legal defence funds for journalists, and training in international laws and standards, etc.
- Assistance in development of models for coverage of conflict and conflict resolution, and of the necessary security measures for this.
- Support for media watchdog groups, especially as part of broader anti-corruption efforts.

[76] This discussion is drawn from Becker and Vlad (2005), Howard (2003) and Price et al. (2002).

Lessons and remaining challenges
While the field of media development is not as controversial as other areas of democracy assistance, and in general donors feel comfortable and confident in providing such aid,[77] it still poses certain challenges. These include government reluctance to liberalise the media, how to respond to partisan media outlets committed to a particular agenda, and identifying the appropriate media outlets with which to partner in-country.

The two most significant challenges, however, seem to be in establishing a proper sequencing between liberalising the media and other essential institutional developments, and monitoring and evaluating media assistance efforts in a comprehensive and systematic manner. The first is a common problem in so-called 'fragile' or post-conflict states. In their rush to promote democratisation in post-conflict settings, donors have at times been too quick to encourage the liberalisation of the media in the absence of the broader institutional framework needed to anchor a more liberalised system. The dangers of liberalising the media without professionalising it and holding it to certain standards became horrifically evident in Rwanda during the 1994 genocide, where political liberalisation produced a number of independent media that deepened the country's social divisions (Rocha Menocal and Kilpatrick, 2005).

As Howard (2003) notes, 'media assistance and its impact on democratisation remains largely uncharted. The use of media in democratic transitions has not yet produced a significant bibliography of lessons learned and best practices.' The focus has been on counting the number of journalists trained, for example, while there is considerably less information about whether assistance has helped to make the media more impartial and accurate (ibid.). There have, of course, been some notable efforts at monitoring and evaluating media assistance, but these tend to be rather ad hoc, focused on individual programmes rather than on the overall consequences of investment (Becker and Vlad, 2005). As a result, donors still have little guidance on what strategies may work best and how to design effective media assistance programmes.

Evaluations of specific programmes suggest variation in the degree to which international assistance has made a substantial contribution to the professionalisation and independence of the media. For example, a study conducted by the Cox Center in 2005 on the impact of media assistance programmes in the Ukraine finds that publications supported by international donors differed in their coverage of the Orange Revolution of late 2004, compared with publications that had not received support, and concludes that the former were more likely to provide balanced coverage of the opposition (Becker and Vlad, 2005). A 2004 summary report by USAID assessing the organisation's media programmes concluded that USAID-supported professional training programmes improved news content and coverage and helped institutionalise notions of press freedom (USAID, 2004). Evaluating two major media assistance projects in Romania, Carothers (1996) finds, on the other hand, that the assistance 'failed to contribute to the development of independent media' and 'has not contributed to the development of professionalised media in the country'.

Remaining challenges for democracy assistance to the media include:

- *Donor co-ordination in the field of media assistance has been lacking*. This has led to a duplication of efforts and even rivalry among donors, making assistance less effective than it could be. One model to emulate could be the International Media Fund, which constitutes a co-ordination of efforts by several major international media donors operating within selected countries (Howard, 2003).
- *Media assistance should move beyond urban-based print media*. Support should be provided to media outlets in more rural areas, such as community radio, which have a wide

[77] Of course, this may not always be the case. According to one observer, some donors prefer to keep their media support on the technical side, fearing that it could otherwise get too political. Malawi offers such an example, where DFID shied away from getting involved in the content of news or in media reform (pers. comment, D. Cammack, 27 July 2006).

reach. Donors can provide much needed expertise, training and resources in this area (Schoofs and de Zeeuw, 2005).

- *Public media should also be considered for democracy assistance.* Donors should not concentrate their media efforts exclusively on private media outlets or on privatising existing ones. As Howard (2003) notes, 'well-equipped yet unreliable state media should not be overlooked as resource-rich and high-impact opportunities for reform and improvement', particularly as they offer opportunities to reach broader audiences.

4. Democracy assistance: Lessons and implications

This paper has provided a broad overview of key strands and findings in the democratisation literature, and of a wide variety of the available material on democratisation assistance to date. This section draws together some key lessons and implications which represent the immediate conclusions of Work Package 1 of the research programme 'Good Governance, Aid Modalities and Poverty Reduction: Linkages to the Millennium Development Goals and Implications for Development Co-operation Ireland'. These should be treated as provisional. Further implications from this Work Package will be drawn in the programme's synthesis report.

The Third Wave of democratisation includes many low-income countries in sub-Saharan Africa and elsewhere in the developing world, opening up new opportunities for participation and voice. However, while transitions to democracy have taken place in countries irrespective of levels of economic development and other structural conditions (e.g. religion), the consolidation of democratic regimes has proven much more challenging, especially in poor countries (as discussed primarily in Sections 2.2 and 2.3).

As emphasised in the literature and recognised more recently by donors, democracy cannot be reduced to the holding of elections. Democratisation processes in many countries of the Third Wave where elections are held on a regular basis have stalled. These 'hybrid regimes' have not yet been able to consolidate their incipient democratic structures, and as a result formal democratic institutions often co-exist with other informal institutions in ways that are not always mutually reinforcing. Thus, democratisation itself has not automatically brought about greater accountability and transparency, adherence to the formal rules of the democratic game or the equality of all citizens before the law for example, and as a result there has been growing disillusionment about what democracy can achieve. While many of the expectations concerning the outcomes of a democratic system (e.g. better developmental outcomes) may have been unrealistic or misplaced, the process through which decisions are made and power is exercised in these incipient democracies or hybrid regimes remains deeply flawed. A fundamental lack of accountability, transparency, fairness and equality before the law persists, which in turn generates further frustration and disillusionment.

4.1 Key lessons and implications for democracy assistance

This review has shown that the democracy promotion agenda has evolved over the past two decades, and that many of the problems experienced are being addressed. However, a number of challenges and inconsistencies should be considered in order for the international donor community to more effectively assist processes of democracy promotion and the strengthening of democratic institutions.

The impetus for democratisation needs to come from within, so donors need to be realistic about what can be achieved from the outside

One of the key lessons to emerge from Section 2 of this report is that, to be successful, democratisation processes need to be driven from within and supported by (at least some) key domestic actors. As illustrated by the case of Iraq, efforts to impose democracy from the outside without domestic support are likely to be unsustainable, if not to backfire. This is particularly true of democratic consolidation and the creation of effective democratic accountability mechanisms, both of which require active and effective domestic constituents. External factors can play a significant role in democratisation processes, acting as triggers (the end of the Cold War, for example) and influencing the interests, positioning and preferences of strategic domestic actors who may be in favour of democratic reforms. But they need to be both realistic and humble about what they can achieve from the outside.

Democracy assistance is inherently political
While slowly beginning to change, for a long time donors have been reluctant to openly acknowledge that development concerns cannot be divorced from politics, and instead have preferred to view their interventions as mainly technocratic. However, experience has shown that the field of democracy assistance is inherently political. Democratisation itself is a deeply political, conflict-generating process that seeks to change the distribution of power between social groups; by empowering one set of institutions and actors over others (whether inadvertently or not), donors have an impact on internal power dynamics, especially in poor, aid-recipient societies.

Thus, donors need to recognise the political nature of democracy promotion, but this does not mean that such work should be partisan. Assistance to political parties can be a useful illustration. Political parties have remained one of the weakest links in democratic development in many of the incipient democracies emerging in the developing world, particularly in Africa and Latin America, and research suggests that their weak capacity and durability constitutes a major obstacle to the institutionalisation of democracy. At the same time, support to political parties remains a contentious issue, especially as donors are reluctant to engage in work that is perceived as directly involved in domestic political processes. Donors and implementing agencies need to be balanced in their support, working with political parties across the political spectrum and focusing on the institutionalisation of parties (internal rules; funding; how to develop a programmatic base) in order to help reduce the strong personalisation of politics and clientelistic structures present in most developing countries.

Reliance on an idealised blueprint of democracy that is not sensitive to context
In general, a review of the literature suggests that democracy promotion is characterised by a lack of sensitivity to context. Despite differences in recipient-country standards of living, economic, political and institutional capacity and history, democracy assistance programmes appear to derive their model from somewhat idealised notions of democratic development in Western Europe and the US (Carothers, 2000: 85), and the core strategy of democracy promotion tends to pay little attention to domestic political, social and economic power relations. However, democracy assistance in a consolidated autocratic regime, a hybrid regime or a fragile democracy must take different forms. Inattention to this often results in an undue emphasis on formal, as opposed to substantial, change.

Achieving a balance between providing support and avoiding dominance
Democratisation is ultimately a domestic process. Donor assistance needs to strike a careful balance, providing necessary support while avoiding any dominance of the key stakeholders and their agendas, which could create problems of legitimacy, accountability and sustainability. Donors and international organisations may push for democratic reforms and provide resources to strengthen domestic capacity. They should provide a constituency that civil society, the political opposition, courts and legislatures can depend on for support and protection. But too much aid and external involvement can negatively affect the legitimacy of domestic actors and make them vulnerable to accusations of being ‘Western’ or foreign. Heavy-handed donor involvement and oversight in PRSPs, for example, has led many critics to question the ownership of such processes and to resent what they perceive as excessive donor influence in the domestic policy agenda. Furthermore, available evaluations show that there are serious difficulties involved in transplanting formal democratic institutions to societies and sectors where these institutions have no historical roots. Donor-assisted democratic reform projects have at times over-estimated the capacity of political systems to absorb new policies and institutions.

Contradictions between long-term processes of democracy and the need for results
Building democracy is necessarily a long-term and non-linear process, requiring patience and willingness to accept setbacks. However, because of the pressure to show ‘results’, donors continue to pursue forms of democracy promotion that are short-term (focused on elections but less on the strengthening of continuous accountability mechanisms), and/or involve frequent changes in policy direction. Donors need to come to terms more seriously with the potential tensions that arise in the kinds of assistance that they provide due to these very different time

horizons. The changes within democracy and human rights assistance observed in this review indicate that donors are willing to learn and adapt aid to new findings, but that much work remains to be done. As previously emphasised, despite significant cumulative learning from democratisation experience, it is not clear whether donors have taken note of and acted upon these lessons.

The challenge of hybrid regimes and aid allocations and interventions
International democracy assistance has been geared in large part towards strengthening the institutions of accountability – the electoral channel, legislature, the judicial system, special institutions of constraint and local government. However, one of the paradoxes of such assistance is that, despite these considerable efforts (by donors as well as by domestic constituencies), executive dominance has remained strong in many developing countries. 'Strong man' politics remain a marker of the political systems of many, if not most, developing countries undergoing democratisation. Several recent attempts at reversing term limits in many African and Latin American countries serve to illustrate this point. The general tendency of aid to support incumbent regimes and rely on agreements with the executive may itself contribute to this entrenchment of power within the executive and undermine other efforts at strengthening domestic accountability mechanisms (van de Walle, 2001; Fritz and Rocha Menocal, 2006). Thus, how to engage with hybrid regimes has emerged as one of the main challenges for donors providing democracy assistance. Donors need to reflect on how they can help to stabilise and deepen democratic mechanisms and, moreover, whether and how overall aid can be used to provide incentives for democratic consolidation (a central issue for the programme's synthesis report).

Democracy assistance should therefore emphasise the strengthening and formalisation of rules governing executive powers and duties (and other powers of individual members of the executive), as well as those of other branches of government, including the legislature, judiciary and civil service. The aim should be to develop the independence and capacity of other government branches and strengthen the accountability mechanisms among them. At both the national and local levels, democracy assistance should also seek to improve transparency by identifying innovative ways of building the autonomy and capacity of oversight institutions such as freedom of information agencies and ombudsmen.[78] Over the past ten years, for instance, many countries in the developing world have passed transparency and access-to-information laws, that can be effective in enabling citizens to hold government officials to account. Donors should support existing efforts and work with aid-recipient governments and civil society organisations to build the capacity of such entities and expand their reach so as to be able to respond to citizen demands.

Connecting with the grass-roots level and incorporating civil society
The failure of democracy promotion to fit activities to the local environment and give people and organisations within the recipient country a primary role has remained a core challenge. Generally, the review finds that democracy promoters struggle to connect with the grass-roots level. Democracy assistance should work with a broad range of actors, including incumbent political parties and traditional organisations (e.g. farmers' unions, faith-based organisations). Yet donors rarely engage with civil society actors in rural areas and more traditional modes of governance, despite the fact that they may represent useful entry points for international democracy assistance. Most donor agencies have tended to work with NGOs based in capital cities. The need to work with civil society across all levels (central, regional, local) is increasingly recognised, but donors are still struggling with how to translate this into practice. In particular, donors have much work to do in terms of strengthening domestic civil society organisations so that they can become self-sufficient over time, and they should also be more sensitive to the fact that extensive reliance on INGOs may itself undermine the capacity and sustainability of domestic NGOs.

[78] It is especially important to find simple, readily accessible ways of distributing relevant information to ordinary people who may not be very numerate or literate.

The need for more meso- and macro-level evaluations of democratisation assistance
Evaluations of democracy assistance and its various forms are still relatively scarce and often focus on the project level. It is particularly desirable that evaluation methods are developed to handle the deepening and consolidation of democratisation (which, compared with the initial triggering/installing of democracy, is much less directly observable). Evaluations should also address such issues as balance, adequacy of support for the situation of the country, reaching sub-national levels of governance, etc. These kinds of (more systematic) evaluations are essential to be able to share experiences and lessons learned across the field of democratisation.

Achieving a balance between different goals
As has been emphasised throughout this report, democracy assistance is only one aspect of a much broader donor agenda to promote good governance. Democratisation assistance is primarily focused on strengthening institutions deemed essential to ensure that the processes through which decisions are made and power is exercised are inclusive, broadly participatory, open, fair, transparent and accountable. However, particularly in poor countries, weak state capacity as well as weak professional capacity of non-government actors are often a major problem. Freedom and other forms of political liberalisation need to increase alongside an expansion of state capacities and a framework of (formal) institutions that can adequately channel and contain those freedoms (the example of the media in Rwanda is a particularly harrowing example of what happens when the former develops without the latter). Thus, donors often have more than one goal in mind when they are planning interventions. It is therefore essential for donors to prioritise their goals and think about how best to sequence them in order to avoid 'overloading' societies and governance systems with constant changes and demands, not only in their democracy assistance but also in their good governance programmes more generally.

This need to prioritise reforms and remain realistic about what can be achieved is captured in Merilee Grindle's concept of 'good enough' governance (Grindle, 2004). This approach understands governance as a multi-dimensional concept that can be disaggregated into discrete challenges to be potentially tackled separately and at different times. However, while an instrumental approach to governance and development may be useful (because it avoids placing excessive or unrealistic demands on the state and recognises that there is no unique path to 'good governance'), it avoids the issue of whether there should be a set of minimum standards against which states should be held up – a concern that is at the very core of democracy assistance.[79]

Harmonisation and alignment in democratisation assistance
Closely linked to the above point is the need for donors to promote harmonisation and alignment in an attempt to make democracy assistance more effective. This remains a challenge, both within donors' individual programmes as well as collectively. Particularly in hybrid regimes and fragile democracies, democratisation assistance has a key role to play in making political systems more effective and accountable. However, donor fragmentation and lack of alignment with country priorities tend to undermine already rather weak institutions. This in turn has important implications for overall governance and state capacity, and ultimately for the overall effectiveness with which aid can be used in-country (Fritz and Rocha Menocal, 2006).

As was highlighted in Section 3, the relationship between democratisation and improving other aspects of the broader governance agenda can sometimes be complex and pull in different directions, and many of the ensuing tensions remain to be addressed. In addition, some de-fragmentation of assistance is likely to be beneficial. In the area of judicial reform, for instance, it is clearly essential not to 'import' mutually contradictory institutions and legal rules from different sources. Similarly, in other areas (e.g. assistance to parliaments, political parties, media, etc.) it is important to provide assistance that is well-adapted to country circumstances, and that enables country ownership of reforms. Furthermore, to date, various forms of democratisation support – in particular support to political parties and to elections – have often remained separate from general

[79] For a more detailed discussion of the 'good enough' governance approach and its implications for democracy, see Fritz and Rocha Menocal (2006).

development assistance. While the involvement of specialised actors such as party foundations or election observation missions may be beneficial, these should be more strongly linked with wider efforts to support development (especially in a context where the latter is becoming more 'politically aware').

Overall, we recommend more reflection on (i) the mix of bilateral and multilateral assistance and opportunities for in-country collaboration between different actors, (ii) adequate sizes and time-horizons for various forms of democratisation assistance, and (iii) the role of regional actors, organisations and mechanisms such as the AU, NEPAD, the APRM in Africa and the OAS in Latin America to promote democracy.

Greater policy coherence

As highlighted in Section 3, it is essential to acknowledge that democracy assistance takes place alongside the pursuit of other foreign policy objectives. There can be contradictions between security and other foreign policy interests on the one hand, and interests in promoting democratisation and broader good governance on the other. This is why greater policy coherence is highly desirable in order to ensure that efforts on one front are not undermined by activities in other areas.

Moreover, some forms of external support to democratisation may evolve organically, without direct intervention from donors; that is, arising as a by-product of the general linkages between countries undergoing democratisation and developed democracies, rather than from donor assistance as such. It may therefore be that external assistance to democratisation is most effective when bringing different policy areas together, and policy-makers should subsequently seek to strengthen the links between democratisation assistance and other policy areas of the donor country (for example, foreign, immigration and development policy, and educational, research, and administrative exchanges, etc.). Opportunities should be explored for mainstreaming the principles embedded in democracy assistance, including participation, accountability and transparency. Examples may include inserting civic education into support for the education sector or incorporating campaigns about opportunities for political participation within support for the transport sector, etc.

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