International assistance to political party and party system development

Synthesis report

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Acknowledgements

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Executive summary

The need to understand the political context and to engage with national politics as part of development processes is increasingly recognised. External actors – including donor agencies – now accept that local political dynamics are important and that they need to work to support and facilitate change, rather than trying to demand or enforce it (see IDS 2010). In light of this, political parties have come to be seen as an important missing piece of the jigsaw puzzle of effective governance in developing and transition countries. However, the evidence base on impacts, including what works and why, remains thin. With this in mind, the UK Department for International Development (DFID) and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) commissioned ODI to undertake fieldwork in four countries (Georgia, Nepal, Nigeria and Uganda) and one desk-based regional review of Latin America.

Political parties as part of the political system

Political parties remain fundamentally bound to the political systems in which they operate. They reflect processes of state formation, political and institutional development and how social cleavages have translated into political settlements. For example, the logics of presidentialism have affected party dynamics in countries such as Georgia, Uganda and Nigeria, as ruling parties have become vehicles for the President and opposition parties have been kept weak. Other structural features which shape party development include the nature of the electoral system, the informal rules of the game, and experience of conflict, as well as wider geo-political histories and regional politics. This embeddedness has contributed to a number of weaknesses, which have been widely documented and include weak links to citizens, weakly institutionalised structures, fragmented opposition and a lack of robust legal and regulatory frameworks.

That political parties are bound up in their wider political systems, and reflect a given context, seems an obvious point, but it has not necessarily been reflected in much of donor support to political parties to date. Instead, generalisations have commonly been made about party systems and parties within them across a range of very different contexts. With this in mind, we analyse the different models of party assistance present in the countries studied, and offer some critical reflections on the effectiveness of party assistance to date.

Support to political parties: Key features, weaknesses and strengths

The main funders of party assistance include bilateral donors, such as USAID, DFID and other European governments alongside a growing number of party institutes and foundations which implement donor funded programmes. Party assistance reflects a variety of motivations including foreign and security policy objectives, development and humanitarian concerns, geo-political and strategic motivations and ideological concerns. While support to political parties was conventionally linked to support for elections, it has broadened to look at the electoral cycle as whole and to building party structures and systems between elections. This has contributed to a proliferation in the models of party assistance. These involve a range of themes, funding modalities and methods of support.

The most common forms of support focus on strengthening democratisation, through the use of bilateral funding, delivered through an implementing organisation, and centred on capacity development or technical assistance methods. Bilateral funding aimed at ideologically aligned parties, involving support for peer to peer linkages through exchange visits, is another common model of support. In recent years, a number of donor agencies have begun to pool funding and provide a range of support that also involves grant making, inter party dialogue and elements of brokering or negotiating. Thus, the landscape of party assistance is itself changing. Against this evolving background, our study offers a number of reflections and findings on the effectiveness of party assistance, drawing on cumulative evidence from across the case studies. However, it is important to recognise that there remains a significant evidence gap in terms of the impact of these models, since few formal, rigorous evaluations have been carried out in this field.

Some common weaknesses for party assistance emerge across the countries analysed. For the most common model of support – bilateral support aimed at democratisation and involving technical assistance or capacity development – the methods of implementation used are at times inadequate to meet the nature of the highly political processes of party development and contestation involved. In Uganda, for example, support which focused on 'micro' level inputs, aimed at building capacity in a small number of technical areas, does not impact on the wider (macro) challenges faced by parties, such as the challenges of a dominant party system and state-party fusion. The tendency to fall back on narrow, supply driven approaches to assistance is also present in other models. In Nigeria, a pooled funding mechanism provides support to political parties and while funders had a clear understanding of the highly political challenges involved, there appears to be a mismatch between this political awareness and recourse to top-down technical assistance.

Models which support ideologically aligned parties, often through bilateral support to peer linkages, similarly reveal weaknesses where they do not pay close enough attention to the local context in their implementation. In large part, this is because the presumed ideological links upon which support is based are in practice often very weak. In Uganda, for example, party representatives receiving this support commonly do not perceive there to be a strong ideological link, as the nature of the political spectrum in Uganda remains fundamentally shaped by the recent history of internal conflict, ethnic and regional divisions and the no party Movement system – and has little in common with political spectrums in other regions. In practice, this renders party identification and selection for assistance ad hoc and selective, effectively creating a lottery as to which parties are promoted or supported. This model receives more positive reviews, however, in a context like Georgia, which reflects the nature of the Georgian party system (with most parties aligned with Western, centre right ideologies). However this support is still seen as short term and not particularly strategic – exchange visits, for example, are viewed as useful chance to improve English rather than supporting significant party development.

These weaknesses do not mean that there are no effective roles that external actors can play in relation to political parties. Some models, in their design and implementation, do seem to incrementally address some of the incentives and power dynamics of political parties in each country. Firstly, in some countries, donor engagement with parties facilitates brokering, negotiations and political dialogue within and between parties. In Nepal, for example, brokering and negotiating roles have been used to facilitate dialogue between youth wings of the main political parties (previously associated with some of the highest levels of violence and agitation). In Georgia, US support has helped to maintain unity within the ruling party since the Rose Revolution in 2003, by brokering relations between party senior leaders. Success in this approach seems to lie in targeting the right audience and individuals, at the right point in time, and establishing specific purposes for policy or political dialogues. This form of support may not imply large scale programming or resources but rather low cost activities (and significant time investment), which are nevertheless labour intensive as they require continuous donors' engagement over time.

A second area of more effective party assistance is support which more explicitly engages with structural constraints in a given context. For example, the Deepening Democracy Programme in Uganda arguably went further than most in recognising the challenges of the dominance of the ruling party and offering grant making in the face of significant hurdles to opposition parties' ability to raise funds. A third area of more promising party assistance is the provision of very tailored support which can capitalise on some specific opportunities. In Georgia, one party in particular (the Christian Democrats) appears to have benefitted from party assistance because it already has a certain level of capacity in place and so can better capitalise on targeted assistance.

Some of the examples of better practice follow a more conventional 'development' approach, including the development of large scale aid programmes (such as the Deepening Democracy Programme in Uganda); others take a more explicitly 'political' approach, such as high level political engagement in Georgia and Nepal. Both have their strengths and weaknesses, but

what may be needed is a greater combination of these approaches, particularly when it comes to implementation. This should also be a function of context – in Georgia, diplomatic actors have more influence than development ones; in countries with high levels of aid dependency, development actors can and do exert greater influence on political processes and actors. It is also important to recognise that where actors have conventionally played more 'technical' roles (such as donor agencies), moving in to more explicitly political engagement brings with it new risks and requires new skills. Greater attention needs to be paid to some of the inevitable trade-offs this might involve.

Key messages and recommendations

In light of this analysis, a number of key messages and recommendations emerge. These include:

- As political parties are embedded within wider political systems, programme design for party support needs to be underpinned by strong context analysis. This should go beyond one-off or static analysis to be integrated into programming and monitoring. This implies working more at the party system level, on a cross party basis where possible.

- The need to pay close attention to context means that blueprint approaches are far less likely to be effective; instead, any support needs to be tailored to the particular challenges facing individual parties in each country.

- Support that seeks to link ideologically aligned political parties from different countries is particularly problematic. Some donors and funders of party support are already beginning to recognise where this form of support is not appropriate and are supporting alternative approaches.

- For other models of support, challenges for effectiveness surface in their method of implementation rather than initial design. This means that some of the common methods – such as capacity development, technical assistance – need to be rethought or redesigned. Instead, the tool box for implementation could be usefully broadened in a number of countries, to include methods such as grant making, inter-party dialogue and forms of brokering or high level political engagement.

- Success may not be determined by money alone. In some contexts, political engagement and networking may be far more effective than formal programming. Engagement of this type is labour intensive and may require greater efforts to identify areas of complementarity between diplomatic and development actors, where appropriate.

- Across all of the case studies, there is a clear need to strengthen monitoring and evaluation. This should involve greater efforts to compare and triangulate information; integrating lesson learning from past programmes; and monitoring indirect and unintended impacts alongside those which are expected.

1   Introduction to study

In theory, political parties play a central role within well-functioning democracies, aggregating and representing citizens' interests and formulating policy agendas that can respond to citizens' concerns. They should be a crucial interlocutor between citizens and the state. In practice, in many countries – especially developing countries – political parties are weak and disconnected from the policy process, and struggle to connect with or represent citizens and their interests. However, political parties remain weak in many contexts and often do not fulfil these roles.

Despite these challenges, and understandable sensitivities about intervening in processes that are clearly political, donors are increasingly aware that political parties need to be part of the jigsaw of effective governance, and are in the process of working out how best to provide support for political parties and party systems.

With this in mind, the UK Department for International Development (DFID) and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) commissioned ODI to undertake new research into international assistance to political parties and party systems. This synthesis report draws together the findings from fieldwork in four countries (Georgia, Nepal, Nigeria and Uganda) and one desk-based regional review of Latin America.

The objectives for this research were to explore the experience of international support to and engagement with political parties over the last 5+ years, and in doing so:

- To identify country-specific examples of good, bad or 'better' practice in the provision of assistance to political party and party system development, as well as the risks around support for parties, as assessed by providers, beneficiaries and others;
- To draw out some initial lessons on the experience of providers and implementers in assessing their impact and what results frameworks and other quantitative or qualitative tools they use to identify how effective assistance has been;
- To draw together some of the major lessons for international actors providing political party assistance based on the evidence (including factors for success, key challenges and how 'success' has been defined and evaluated);
- To develop specific policy recommendations of operational value for international donors in their provision of support to political parties and party systems, including what conditions and criteria should be taken into account when considering political party assistance.

For each case study, these objectives were set against a country specific context analysis (based on existing analysis and related material) of the role of political parties in domestic political developments and transformations.

While the study is concerned with analysing effectiveness, it is not a formal evaluation and the researchers could not always gain access to relevant programme documents including evaluations for funders other than the UK. This posed some necessary limits on the scope of this study, which seeks to draw out broad lessons regarding what seems to work better, what works less well and why to generate recommendations for external actors and their engagement with political parties going forward.

The report proceeds as follows: Section two examines party development in the case study countries, identifying key historical legacies and structural features which shape party development and the key roles and functions played by political parties in the case study countries. Section three sets out some of the main funders and implementers or party assistance and the key features of the main models of support identified. Section four then offers some critical reflections on the effectiveness of party assistance. While this project does not offer a comprehensive evaluation of individual projects, we do assess some of the overall

weaknesses identified for party assistance and some of the strengths. We also review some of the key aspects of addressing weaknesses in monitoring and evaluation. Finally, Section five sets out key recommendations, focusing on the features which seem to determine when assistance works better and why.

2 Political parties: a missing piece of the puzzle

In this section, we examine the development of political parties and the roles they have played in political, social and economic developments. We find that political parties are shaped by and shape the wider political system in which they operate and that they are also the product of context specific factors. This means that adopting standardised approaches across countries is unlikely to be effective and suggests that external actors need to see political parties as a missing piece of the governance puzzle, alongside the range of other actors, institutions and rules which comprise the political system in a given country.

2.1 Historical legacies and structural features

Political parties and party systems are the product of context specific political, social and economic histories. The nature of party systems, and the type of parties which characterise each context, reflect specific processes of state formation, political and institutional development, and how social cleavages have been resolved (or not) through the evolution of political settlements. Across the countries analysed (Georgia, Nepal, Nigeria, Uganda and a regional overview of Latin America), there are a number of recurrent structural and historical features which seem to be particularly relevant to understanding contemporary structures and challenges for political parties. There are also some important differences across contexts and regions.

Firstly, the logic of presidentialism provides an important distinguishing historical feature across many of the country case studies. In the 1980s and 1990s, academic debates focused on the relative merits of parliamentarism over presidentialism. Linz and others argued that presidentialism by definition enhanced personalist politics and undermined political development (Linz 1990). This was seen to have weakened the democratic prospects of many countries, for example in Latin America. By contrast, parliamentary systems were seen as more likely to lead to more coherent party systems and political stability. The key difference was thought to lie in the incentive structures created by the method of election to the executive branch, and by the nature of the term of office. Others argued that it was not presidentialism per se (or parliamentarism) but rather that each political system – whether parliamentary or presidential - needed to be assessed on the relative merits of the formal and informal attributes of the Executive and legislative powers, and the specific electoral rules that shape them (Mainwaring and Shugart 1997).

Either way, the type of political system does affect internal party dynamics, of governing and opposition parties. For example, while Georgia is formally defined as a semi-presidential system, it is often referred to as 'super-presidential' in light of the strong formal and informal influence of the President, which emerged from the aftermath of the Rose Revolution. In Uganda and Nigeria, histories of alternation between military and civilian rule combined with 'big man' politics have contributed to formal and informal institutional set-ups which similarly concentrate power in the hands of the President. Thus, in Uganda, the President is Head of State, Head of Government and Commander-in Chief of the Uganda People's Defence Force, which "endows the President with significant scope to override opposition and impose his views when he considers it important to do so" (Booth and Golooba-Mutebi 2009).

The particularities of electoral legislation go a long way towards defining the number of, and interaction between political parties. This is more than an issue of whether elections are free and competitive. It has to do with the particular incentive structures for party conduct that relate to the rules of electoral competition. The particular forms and degree of proportional representation or majoritarian system, whether there is an open or closed party list system in

place, or the rules for electing the president, are central in defining the number of political parties that can compete, and the rules of the game for political interaction. These aspects of electoral legislation (often not sufficiently considered in policy analysis of political party assistance) are crucial in shaping party strategies and incentives for consensus and coalition building behaviour – and generally the nature of party interaction. For instance, in Brazil the open-list system severely undermines the internal coherence of parties, including in relation to the legislative process, but conversely arguably provides a stronger link between legislators and their constituents (Morgenstern and Vazquez-D'Elia 2007).

The combined effects of the above contribute to determining whether dominant party systems are likely to emerge or not. The degree to which one party maintains a monopoly on power is also related to the use of patronage and, in some cases, force; or it may reflect the outcome of popular support for historical reasons (the African National Congress in Africa is a case in point). Periods of instability have contributed to the development of de facto one or dominant party rule in countries such as Nigeria and Uganda (and to some extent Georgia), and the growing concentration of power in the Executive and, principally, the President. At the same time, the absence of fair rules and processes of electoral competition means that alternation in power is disputed in other spheres, such as in primary elections. This is the case in Nigeria, but again more influenced by informal rules than through strict adherence to the rules of intra-party competition.

This has reinforced fusion between the state and the ruling party, where the ruling party has used state resources and power to consolidate its position, and where state institutions have become heavily fused with the party. Different characterisations grapple with the blurring of state-party boundaries in dominant party systems. For instance, Carothers distinguishes between state/party fusion which is benign and that which is malign. The former are party systems where the dominant party remains strong but tolerates the existence of other parties; the latter are those in which the 'ruling party has a stranglehold on power and is bent on frustrating the efforts of other parties to gain any significant power' (Carothers 2006). In reality, many of the contexts looked at seem to oscillate between malign and benign tendencies. Levitsky and Lucan (2010) speak of 'competitive authoritarianism' to capture systems where on paper, the rules of electoral competition are more or less in place, but the playing field in reality is rendered uneven by a number of factors that inhibit the fairness of the political game. These include deficient electoral processes that are politically manipulated, poor protection of civil liberties, or uneven deployment of public resources for political ends through excessive state capture by the incumbent party. In any event, of note is the variable range of combinations of forms and degrees of competitive authoritarianism – or the range that exists between malign and benign systems.

In recent years, there has been a growing recognition of the importance of understanding the impact of informal rules of the game on politics (Helmke and Levitsky 2004). The extent to which, for example, clientelism or patronage shape societal structures can have important implications for the political system, and parties within that. In addition there is often an array of unwritten rules of the game for instance regarding how party members are elected, or how presidential candidates are selected. In Nigeria, the 'zoning' arrangement is an informal set of rules within the governing party that acts as the basis for power-sharing at different levels of government, ensuring a rotation of power to account for the ethnic, religious and regional make-up of the country.[1] Understanding the universe of informal rules which effectively shape many of the incentive structures and conduct of political parties remains key. Nepal, Nigeria and Uganda all remain contexts shaped by systems of patronage, for example, which reflect their own historical legacies and continue to shape interactions in the public sphere today. Of course, informal rules (like formal rules) are also susceptible to redefinition or renegotiation, resulting from context specific processes of political and social realignments, either through evolutionary shifts in the balance of power, or through unforeseen events, such as the death of a presidential figure.

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[1] At the time of writing, this was being redefined in the wake of the death of President Yar'adua (in 2010), who was from the North and was replaced by a successor from the South.

Moreover, there are a number of examples where political parties have shaped moments of state formation and political development (and been in turn shaped by them). At times they have further exacerbated weaknesses in the political system. In Nigeria, the complicity and involvement of political parties in election violence in 2007 reveals the extent to which parties may instigate instability, and this is reinforced where there is weak rule of law and complicity by state institutions. On the other hand, in Nepal, the seven parties represented in Parliament and the Maoists (in a process of transition into a political party) entered into negotiations for the Comprehensive Peace Accord which, in 2006, ended a People's War which had run for more than a decade. Similarly in Georgia, the United National Movement (UNM) played a central role in the so-called Rose Revolution, which signalled the end of a regime widely seen as corrupt and unable to provide the most basic of social services or protections.

2.2   The importance of context

The structural challenges discussed above shape the wider political system in each country, and thus impact on a wide range of political actors and processes, which political parties are just one component of. At the same time, political parties are the products of context-specific political, social and economic histories. While this may seem an obvious point, it has often been overlooked, and instead generalisations have been made about party systems and the parties within them across a range of very different contexts.

The importance of context is in part illustrated by the varying levels of party development in a given context. For example, in many Latin American countries, there are long histories of party development, so that current weaknesses are explained by party decay or the decline of more established parties; in other parts of Latin America, the 'crisis' of parties concerns the persistence of unstable and fragmented party systems (Carothers 2006). African parties are relatively new institutions dating from the post-colonial period, and they are likely to have experienced the consolidation of one-party presidential rule and more recently the opening up of multi-party politics, with ongoing fragilities in the party system (Ibid.).

Alongside these historical contextual features, a number of current challenges seem to shape the context for political parties today. In Latin America, the third wave of democratisation since the 1970s has suffered from growing disenchantment in the face of the recognition of the shortcomings of the Washington Consensus and the failings of democracy to deliver real change for the poorest. This has led to the creation of new political formations, such as the indigenous movements of Bolivia, Peru, Mexico or the emergence of neo-populist figures including Hugo Chavez in Venezuela. Moreover, organised crime and the drugs trade is an increasingly significant feature of many Latin American contexts and is having a significant impact on party systems in Colombia and Mexico. These shape the overall context parties must respond to, as well as having important implications for how parties organise, finance and connect with citizens.

Party systems are also shaped by a country's regional politics and geo-political history. In Georgia, the party system remains polarised by attitudes towards Russia and shaped by the wider post Cold War context in the Caucasus (such as the war over Ossetia and Abkhazia in the summer of 2008). Histories of unresolved social cleavages (in relation to class, ethnicity or religion) can perpetuate confrontational politics which colours how parties develop and interact. In Nepal, the recent People's War by the Maoists and ongoing street protests, combined with a long history of caste hierarchy and patronage, pose current challenges and constraints.

Resource rich countries can present particular challenges for political party development. The associated rent-seeking incentives that economies based on natural resources generate are likely to affect party conduct – especially in the absence of state institutions which can ensure appropriate levels of rule of law and probity in the use of public resources. In Nigeria, the challenges of a centralised oil economy in a regionally diverse society, with complex formal and informal systems for power-sharing among different groups poses wide-ranging challenges for political party development.

Taken together, these contextual features shape many of the features of political parties in each country. This is reflected in the functions and roles played by political parties today, and in the main weaknesses identified in this study.

2.3   Key weaknesses of political parties

In theory, political parties play a central role within well-functioning democracies, through aggregating and representing citizens' interests, formulating policy agendas that respond to citizens' concerns, and forming government and opposition (Carothers 2006). In reality, political parties appear to have been weakest in their roles as links between the state and citizens, but they continue to play a number of important roles in organising the procedures of the state, which require a certain level of group organisation that parties are often best placed to provide. This includes the organisation of elections, the running of parliamentary life and the formation of government (Bartolini and Mair 2001).

Across all of the countries examined, political parties are instrumental to the organisation of elections. To varying degrees, many of the parties in Nigeria, Georgia, Uganda and Nepal can be described as electoralist, and this includes a spectrum from more programmatic parties, which are thinly organised and mainly focused on elections but retain some distinctive programmatic agendas, to catch all or personalistic parties which overwhelmingly have an electoral orientation (and in the extreme, whose only rationale is as a vehicle for a leader to win power) (Gunther and Diamond 2001).

Political parties also play core roles in maintaining power following an election and, in some of the contexts analysed, they use patronage and the ability to provide rents to do so. In Uganda, the ruling party (the National Resistance Movement, NRM) is generally under the control of the President and plays a key role in maintaining his power and ensuring his re-election. At the same time, the NRM's longevity and past history under a 'no party' system has meant that it has often subsumed opposition members into its ranks, by offering patronage and access to resources. Thus the ability to provide rents can create incentives to individuals to switch parties, or to be co-opted into the ruling party. In relation to Nepal, the maintenance of systems of rent-seeking and patronage are a key function of political parties. As one commentator notes "This is, therefore, like a market-exchange system – 'votes for favours' and 'favours for votes' – between the powerbrokers and the party" (Hachhethu 2007: 154). This relates to the dominance of so-called 'big man' politics which shapes the context for parties, and in practice they are often highly personalised and associated with their leaders above all else.

This reinforces weak links to citizens, both in terms of representing and responding to their concerns. Parties are commonly seen as dominated by elites, with few incentives to respond to citizens' concerns (although in some contexts, such as Nigeria, systems of patronage do create some forms of responsiveness, albeit selectively so; in others, such as Nepal, this is mainly limited to a small group of the elites). Moreover, in many of the countries studied, from those in Latin America to Uganda and Nigeria, there is little sense of citizens identifying in meaningful ways with different political parties. This supports Bratton and Logan's argument (2006) that, in many African contexts, people may have become voters but are not yet 'citizens' and have not developed effective relationships with political actors. In some cases societal forces have by-passed parties altogether precisely because they were perceived as elite driven, through mobilising politically around new social movements. This is so in some cases in Latin America where the legitimacy crisis of parties has led to alternative forms of political representation through grass roots movements that are perceived as being closer to the electorate. Of course, as these 'citizen led' movements gain elective office, as in the case of the *Movimiento Al Socialismo* (MAS) in Bolivia, then the distinction between social movements and parties becomes blurred.

Weak substantive institutionalisation is a common weakness for some. Political parties in Georgia, Nepal, Nigeria and Uganda generally maintain a small number of influential backers, and are run in a command fashion, invariably with weak links with their grassroots and lacking

well defined policy platforms. This translates into a lack of party organisation at local levels – supporting Burnell's contention that in many contexts, the parliamentary group may be the "only 'permanent' organ a party has... The party is a head without a body" (Burnell 2004).

However, there are often divergences between a generally strong ruling party, which commonly has much higher levels of institutionalisation geared to winning elections, and a number of weak and fragmented opposition parties. This is reinforced by wider contexts of presidentialist systems and state/party fusion. The only case study which did not seem to conform to this was Nepal, where the Maoist party (a new party, emerging from an armed group during the People's War) seems to have stronger organisation at local levels, with committees of the party and affiliated organisations established down to village level (reflecting its mobilisation at local levels during the conflict). Our analysis also suggests that the nature of these parties may be more complex than initially thought. For example, while parties remain strongly associated with their founding leaders, and often function as vehicles for individuals to gain election, they also inevitably develop roles as institutions in their own right – so, understanding the different ways in which parties can become institutionalised is key.

In a number of contexts, the fragmentation of parties is a recurring weakness, as parties can split, decay or start up seemingly overnight. This leads to a proliferation of smaller parties, many of which in practice are irrelevant to political life. For example, formally Nigeria has 59 political parties, most of which are at most one-person vehicles with little grassroots support; only six have representation in Parliament and only three are seen as particularly influential (the People's Democratic Party, the All Nigeria People's Party and the Alliance for Democracy).

Challenges can be identified at the party system level, including the lack of robust legal, regulatory and financial frameworks, all of which are made worse in contexts of weak rule of law. For example, in Georgia there are big discrepancies between the levels of funding of the ruling party and that of opposition parties, largely due to differences in private support. The opposition argues that the government uses a combination of inducements and threats to encourage businesses to support the ruling party and discourage the support of others. In Nepal, there are seemingly few limits to party spending and a culture of highly secretive party financing, which reflects both that parties are accustomed to working in this way after long periods of banned activity and that state institutions remain weak in their ability to hold parties to account (TI Nepal 2010). Opaque party finances are a common feature across many contexts, but do pose particular challenges for the development of more institutionalised and responsive parties in the long run.

Finally, there are some additional challenges in contexts like Nepal where armed movements are effectively in a process of transitioning into political parties. This has led to ongoing tensions regarding the Maoist party's ability to embrace democratic politics and the maintenance of the peace process, in light of the ongoing preserve of the Maoist army (albeit one confined to cantonments) and the radical elements of its youth wing, the Young Communist League (ICG 2008). Box 1 summarises these common challenges and weaknesses of political parties.

Box 1: Weaknesses and challenges for political parties

Weaknesses of political parties:
- Political parties as electoralist not programmatic (dominant rationale as a vehicle for leaders to win power)
- Weak responsiveness to citizens
- Weak substantive institutionalisation; common imbalance between very strong ruling party and fragmented, weak opposition

Challenges for political party development
- Lack of robust legal, regulatory and financial frameworks
- Systems of patronage and rent seeking (which can incentivise vote buying)
- Transitions from armed movements to political parties (which can contribute to militarised party structures)

The analysis above suggests that any approach to party assistance needs to first understand the political system as a whole and the interactions between actors, institutions and rules, of which political parties are one – but not the only – important component and secondly, to identify the key contextual factors which have shaped party development in each country. While these may seem to be self evident, they were not evident in much of the party assistance examined for this research.

While weaknesses on the surface may seem similar across different contexts, in fact they have very different historical roots, and remain grounded in the nature of the political settlements and wider dynamics in a given context. In other words, the identified weaknesses of political parties are in fact symptomatic of a range of different ailments (reflecting different histories and so on in each country) and they therefore need targeted treatment, which is likely to differ widely from one country to another.

Forms of assistance which are not able to engage with these structural challenges and incentives are more likely to tend towards blueprint approaches that in turn have little impact. This is explored further in the following sections, which set out the different models of support identified and offer some critical reflections on the effectiveness of party assistance in the countries analysed to date.

3 Main models of support to political parties and party systems

The case studies reveal a plurality of funders, implementers and forms of support to political parties. At times, these go far beyond conventional understandings of support to include aspects of policy dialogue, brokering or political engagement, alongside more conventional forms of capacity development support. The main models of support, key funders and implementers are described in brief below.

3.1 Main funders and implementers

The US Government is a key player in the field of party assistance across all of the countries analysed. This is commonly led by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), working closely with counterparts from the State Department and Embassies. US support represents a combination of strategic interests and a value-driven commitment to the promotion of democratisation. USAID tends to work predominately through two intermediary organisations, the National Democratic Institute (NDI) and the International Republican Institute (IRI), set up in 1983 with the creation of the National Endowment for Democracy, funded by US Congress. For example, in Georgia, USAID has played a significant role in Georgian politics since the end of the Soviet regime, both through its political support for President Saakashvili following the Rose Revolution and through its funding of NDI and IRI for technical assistance and capacity development to a range of parties. This reflects both post Cold War politics, some strategic interests in security in the region, and an overall commitment to supporting countries transiting to democracy (and to economic liberalisation). Similarly, USAID works through NDI and IRI to provide cross party technical assistance in Nepal, Nigeria, Uganda and parts of Latin America.

The UK Government appears to be an increasingly important player in terms of party assistance in the countries analysed. UK Embassies have maintained links with the leadership of political parties in Georgia, Nepal, Nigeria and Uganda as part of their ongoing bilateral relationships. Increasingly DFID has begun to play a role in party assistance in some of the countries analysed. For example, in Latin America, DFID led a new approach to party assistance through the Regional Assistance Programme, which sought to work with political parties to encourage greater analysis and initiatives regarding securing pro-poor reforms. In Nigeria and Uganda, DFID is contributing to multi-donor basket funds which included components of assistance to political parties.

Other governments, including the Swedish, Danish and Dutch, have funded aspects of assistance to political parties, including funding through the multi-donor basket funds in Nigeria and Uganda. In general, this assistance is presented as part of these governments' support for democratisation and the protection of human rights. A number of multi-lateral donors play somewhat limited roles in party assistance, including the European Union (EU) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), who are both involved in party assistance in parts of Latin America; the EU also channels some funding through the basket fund in Nigeria.

Party assistance reflects a variety of motivations for external actors. For funders, particularly bilaterals, this includes security and foreign policy objectives, development and humanitarian concerns, and geo-political and strategic motivations. For the US, support to political parties is part of its explicit commitment to democracy promotion, which has been a key goal for its development and foreign policy engagement since the end of the Cold War (Rakner et al 2008). This has transcended party lines in that different administrations have maintained the commitment to democracy promotion, albeit with differing areas of emphasis (Ibid.). For European funders, party assistance is linked to support for democratisation and human rights, although some (like the UK through DFID) have phrased this more in terms of governance and accountability. For the EU, party support grows out the commitments under the European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights (1994) and the EU's commitment to democratisation, for example in its support to transition countries.

Support to political parties has conventionally been linked to support for electoral processes, an area which dominated much of the broader democracy assistance support in the 1980s. Since then, emphasis within democracy assistance has shifted and broadened to include the electoral cycle as whole and the provision of support to other institutions (judiciary, parliament) and, most recently, increasing attention to political parties themselves (Rakner et al 2008).

Alongside these bilateral and multilateral funders, there are a number of party foundations who receive funds from their respective Ministries of Finance and generally operate independently from the strategies of their home governments. These include the German Stiftungun (including Konrad Adenauer, Friedrich Ebert and Friedrich Naumann), which are affiliated to particular parties in Germany (Christian Democrats, Social Democrats and the Free Democratic Party, respectively)[2]. The UK's Westminster Foundation for Democracy involves all three of the major political parties in the UK (Conservatives, Labour, Liberal Democrats) in a combination of ideologically aligned support (the majority of its work) and some cross party support. It is funded by the FCO and in some instances DFID.

Other party institutes who play important roles in implementing party assistance, funded by bilateral and multi-lateral funders, include the NDI and the IRI, US party institutes with loose affiliations to the Democratic Party and Republican Party respectively which operate on a cross party basis. The Netherlands Institute for Multi-Party Democracy (NIMD) is a relative newcomer, which includes representation from all of the major political parties in the Netherlands and also works on a cross party basis.

In general, support is not aligned to a particular political party in another country. But there are some exceptions to this. For example, the German Stiftungun have tended to focus on parties that are perceived to share their own ideologies, although more recently there is evidence of a shift to more multi-party support in some countries. In Georgia, high level political support has focused on the government and ruling party, although there has been some cross-party assistance funded too.

Whereas historically there have been clearer links between funders and their implementers, this seems to be increasingly breaking down, as funders work in practice with a range of implementers across different countries. For example NIMD primarily received Dutch funding, but increasingly also work with other funders, usually at country level (for example, through

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[2] Some party foundations in more recent years have also received funding from other sources such as the European Commission.

involvement as an implementer of aspects of a Deepening Democracy Programme). Moreover, many of the more established actors, such as NDI and IRI appear to be increasingly branching out from their conventional funders (USAID in this case) to access additional funding from other bilaterals. However, the rationale for which implementers are selected by funders in a given country was not always clear in the case studies analysed, although in some cases having an established presence or reputation in a given area reportedly played a role.

3.2   Main models of support

While it was very difficult to quantify (many funders do not make levels of funding to party assistance public, in part due to the political sensitivities involved) support seemed to range from low level, short term support in the tens of thousands to multi-million multi-year investment – in Nigeria, the new joint donor basket fund will run from 2010 to 2015 and the political parties component is set at $6.4 million (out of $80 million to the basket fund as a whole). These varying funding levels reflect a range of models of support, which in turn involve a range of thematic areas, modalities and methods, summarised in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Main themes, modalities and methods of party assistance
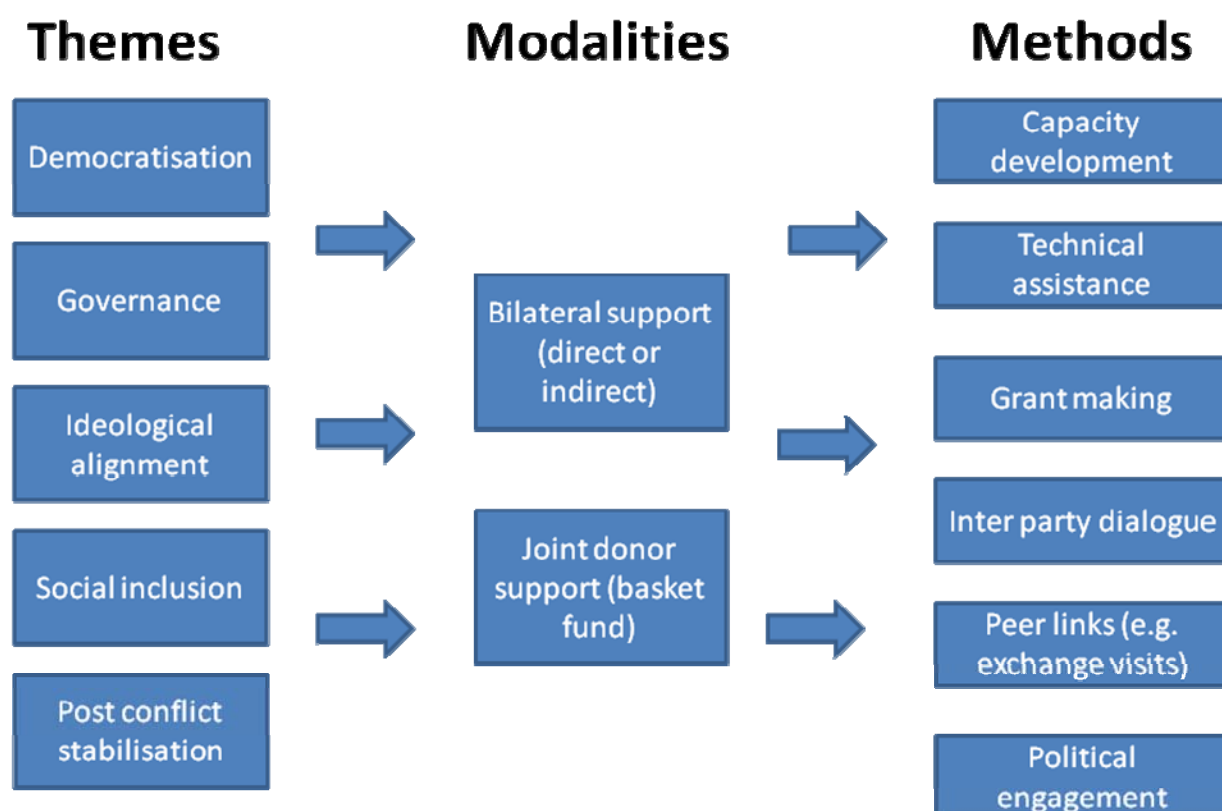
In each country, we found a variety of combinations of the three categories illustrated in Figure 1. The most common thematic focus of support across the case studies was democratisation, and this often involved funding through bilateral support (usually indirectly through an implementer) and with methods that involved forms of capacity development and/or technical assistance. Newer entries under these categories appear to be post conflict stabilisation as a thematic priority, the use of basket funding – allowing donors to pool their funds together for support – and methods such as grant making and inter-party dialogue.

Turning first to the most common model of party assistance, namely bilateral support aimed at democratisation and involving capacity development or technical assistance, a number of examples were identified in each country. In Uganda, USAID has bilaterally funded a wide range of capacity development activities, as part of its support for democratisation,

implemented principally by IRI (with NDI playing a supervisory role) and funded by USAID. These activities are wide ranging and have included working with party leadership to develop strategic and corporate plans, strengthening constitution and guiding party documents, training on communication, support for resource mobilisation and campaigning. Commonly some support is targeted at specific groups, such as women. This is also the case in Nigeria and Georgia, and reflects the nature of USAID's multi-year funding which allows for the funding of a combination of activities, rather than one-off or stand alone projects.

This form of assistance is in some contexts focused on the specific electoral functions of parties, such as campaigning or manifesto development. For example, in Georgia, USAID bilateral funding is again aimed at democratisation (but also reflects geopolitical relationships) and is implemented by NDI and IRI. This form of technical assistance is focused on specific tailored inputs offered to the main political parties, with a particular focus on the conduct of polling regarding party and policy preferences.

Another common model of support identified involved a thematic focus on ideologically aligned political parties, financed through bilateral funding (often direct funding) and involving a range of peer to peer activities such as exchange visits or forms of capacity development. This is model was present in Uganda, Nepal and to a limited degree in Georgia and Nigeria. It effectively links political parties in a developed country to those in another (developing or transition) country, based on perceived ideological similarities. It includes direct linkages between parties, such as between the British Conservative Party (through the Westminster Foundation for Democracy) and the Forum for Democratic Change (FDC), the largest opposition party in Uganda. Alternatively, it can involve more indirect use of intermediaries, such as channelling funds to Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) affiliated to political parties (as many of the German Stiftungun do) or to groupings of parties, such as the Inter-Party Cooperation group, which brings together a number of opposition parties in Uganda to contest for power as a united front, and which receives funding from the Swedish Christian Democrats. The common methods for this approach include the use of exchange visits and forms of capacity development including short training (often with external consultants) and some limited resourcing (such as funding for computers or for bicycles for party activists in some contexts).

A newer model of party assistance represents the entrance of development agencies into the provision of support to political parties, under the development of 'Deepening Democracy Programmes' which commonly have a number of components, including support to political parties alongside parliaments, civil society and the media. This model involves support targeted at democratisation or at improving governance, financed through basket funding, and involving a range of activities from capacity development to grant making to inter party dialogue. These models have been established by development agencies and as such, are concentrated in low income countries with relatively high levels of aid dependency. Therefore they are less relevant to parts of Latin America, the Caucuses and other transition countries, as well as middle income countries more generally, although they arguably could work just as well, if not more effectively, in countries with more developed party systems.

In Nigeria, the Deepening Democracy Programme is administered by UNDP and supported through a basket fund, which involves pooled contributions from the EC, CIDA and the UK. This is currently being renewed, with Joint Basket Fund II to run from 2010 to 2015. The renewed fund is still in its set-up phase but it is currently foreseen that political party support will take the form of engagement with party leaders through dialogue and training, facilitated by the Inter-Party Advisory Council, an inter-party forum established the electoral commission in Nigeria. Of note is that the Nigeria programme places party support within a broader political system reform process, with much emphasis placed on the need to reform the electoral commission as a central systemic obstacle to political party development and to ensuring a level playing field in electoral competition.

In Uganda, the 'Deepening Democracy Programme' is administered by a Programme Management Unit (PMU) and supported through a basket fund involving the Danish, Irish, Swedish, Dutch, Norwegian and British donor agencies. The political party component has two

key dimensions; a grant making facility[3] and support for inter-party dialogue (see Box 2). Out of a total budget of £11 million, the political party component receives £1.2 million, in the period from April 2008 to December 2011.

Box 2: Main elements of the Ugandan Deepening Democracy Programme

Two key components of the DDP in Uganda:

- Grant-making facility for political parties themselves: Grants are in theory open to all parties, but parties must first undergo an assessment process and must meet certain eligibility criteria (for example, they must be registered with the Electoral Commission, must meet their electoral law obligations). The assessment process includes a review of formal party documents, financial systems and information, and semi structured phone interviews with party members. A report is produced by the PMU, shared with the party but not more widely. The level of grant a party is entitled to is linked to party income, and grants cannot be higher than the amount of money raised in the previous year (DDP 2008).

- Inter-party dialogue: Since September 2009, the NIMD has begun to facilitate a process of inter-party dialogue involving the six parties with representation in Parliament. This has involved an exchange visit to Ghana, to learn from experiences of inter-party dialogue, and the creation of a forum for inter-party dialogue where party representatives will meet regularly to discuss a range of issues including electoral reform (Luyten 2010).

In Nepal, two other models of assistance were identified. These reflect the current peace process in Nepal, which brought the Maoists to the table, and encouraged its transition from an armed group to a political party. The peace process instigated a new constitution process, around which a number of fora for policy dialogue have been established and which include political parties as one of the actors involved. This has meant that, as part of a thematic focus on post-conflict stabilisation, political parties have been engaged through indirect bilateral support in activities aimed at fostering inter party dialogue (and dialogue with other actors). These have been funded by a range of actors (including the UK, Norway and the US) and are implemented by a number of organisations, including International IDEA and the Centre for Constitutional Dialogue, established and run by UNDP.

At the same time, in recognition of high levels of discrimination due to successive periods of hierarchical rule and the legacies of a caste based system, social inclusion has emerged as a key thematic priority in Nepal. This has led to bilateral, indirect funding commonly involving inter (and intra) party dialogue as well as capacity building to support women and other discriminated groups (such as certain ethnic minorities) to gain access to political participation. This is commonly funded by donors like the UK (DFID) and implemented by organisations such as International IDEA, as well as by the Enabling State Programme, established and funded by DFID.

The facilitation of policy and political dialogue in order to support greater democratisation has also been a feature of support to Latin America, where organisations such as NIMD, UNDP and International IDEA have been involved in parts of the region (funded by US as well as European donors). This is particularly the case where political polarisation or social unrest have (re)emerged, such as in Ecuador or Bolivia, or where the legacy of war and conflict has left fractured communities in place (Guatemala) and where the role of facilitating dialogue between political actors is seen as particularly helpful for ensuring greater stability.

Finally, this study identified forms of support which are often overlooked in analysis of party assistance. These are again often aimed at democratisation or at post conflict stabilisation in some contexts and they are funded bilaterally but involve forms of political engagement, and in some cases, brokering or the provision of high level guidance. While this often does not involve large programmes of funding, it does represent an important area of engagement. For

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[3] Under Ugandan law, political parties are allowed to receive grants, donations and gifts in kind from foreign governments up to 20,000 currency points (UGX400, 000,000) in a 12 month period. To date, three opposition parties have received grants.

example, in Nepal, again in light of the peace process, a number of Embassies engage regularly with the leadership of the main political parties, in part to apply pressure so that they adhere to their agreements under the peace process and in part to ensure channels of bilateral communication remain open.

In Georgia, this form of engagement seems to have been particularly significant. Some external actors, particularly the US, have long been engaged with Georgian national politics and have played an important and recognisable role in brokering meetings between leaders, establishing fora for political dialogue and so on. In the aftermath of the Rose Revolution in 2003, this support was seen as particularly important for both its support to the revolution and for playing a role in keeping the three main players in the ruling party (the UNM) together. This often involves direct contacts between external actors and party members.

These models and examples from the country case studies are summarised in Annex 1. In general, these models appear to correspond well to the identified weaknesses set out in Section 2. However, what seems to be key in determining how effective these models of support are is how they are implemented and designed. This is explored further in the next section, which critically reflects on the case study findings for these models.

4 The effectiveness of party assistance

While in theory, all of the models above may work well in some contexts, a wide number of examples were identified in the case studies where international assistance seemed to fall short. The principle reason for this appears to lie in the remaining tendency to fall back on technical and narrow supply-driven approaches to implementation that do not engage with the wider structural constraints and incentives. This section offers some reflections on the different models of support identified and where they do – and do not – engage effectively in party assistance.

4.1 Weaknesses in party assistance

While there are some significant differences between the contexts studied, a number of common themes emerge. A key finding is that, while there is evidence of growing awareness and analysis of the challenges for political parties in the aims and objectives of international assistance, there is a remaining tendency to fall back on narrow technical and supply-driven approaches in the implementation of assistance. This seems to affect all the models analysed, in differing ways.

In relation to the most common model of support, involving bilateral support aimed at democratisation and involving technical assistance and capacity building activities, the nature of assistance provided by some implementers is at times seen as inadequate to meet the nature of the highly political processes of party development and contestation involved. In Uganda, for example, while the majority of political parties interviewed identified a lack of capacity and technical skills as major challenges, there is a strong sense that 'micro' level inputs, aimed at building capacity in a small number of technical areas, cannot impact on the wider (macro) challenges faced by parties, such as the challenges of a dominant party system and fusion between state and ruling party. In part, this is because this support is not systematic (it often does not cover all parties, or all parts of party development, due to limited resources and other constraints) but it also reflects the fact that these wider systematic challenges cannot be easily addressed by micro level technical inputs alone.

This can reinforce the provision of top down, supply driven assistance, with little evidence regarding how and whether buy-in has been secured from participating parties. In Uganda, for example, parties noted that technical assistance providers 'came with their proposals and parties have to fit with them' and that they 'develop what they think parties need'. While implementers and funders raised concerns regarding becoming too demand driven – in the sense that parties, with their current weaknesses, may not always be the best judges of what

assistance should look like – without some form of buy-in secured, it seems unlikely that assistance will be effective.

Similarly, in Georgia, there is some evidence that bilateral support involving technical assistance cannot alone easily address the wider universe of incentives for political parties. Here, the NDI and IRI provide support through the use of polling and research surveys for parties. It is hoped that these polls provide a more accurate evidence base of levels of support for parties and that they help push parties to focus more on issues, and less on personalities. However, while the use of polling can impact on party messaging, it is not at all clear that parties have the necessary capacity and incentives in place to fully respond to this data in a way which would support party development.

On the other hand, there is a sense that when parties have some of the basic structures, resources and capacities in place, as well as some kind of strategic direction, they can then benefit significantly from discrete training, capacity building, and technical assistance. A case in point are the Christian Democrat Party in Georgia, who are seen by many as the only opposition party currently benefiting from programmes of party support, as well as other opportunities such as collaboration and networking with ideologically aligned European partners. In part this is because they have a certain level of institutionalisation and a leadership able to capitalise on the support available.

The tendency to fall back on narrow, supply driven approaches to party assistance in its implementation are present for other models too. For the basket funding model in Nigeria, despite interviews revealing a clear understanding by external actors of the highly political challenges involved, there appears to be a mismatch between this political awareness and recourse to top-down, supply driven technical assistance, aimed at building the capacity of party leadership in a number of ways. This does not seem to engage with the identified challenges of a dominant party system, divisions along ethnic, religious and regional lines, and the prevalence of patronage.

This is reinforced by the choice of the key implementer through which resources are channelled, namely the Inter-Party Advisory Council which is seen by some political parties as a puppet institution of the electoral commission and, most significantly, of the ruling party (the People's Democratic Party). While external actors are aware of these criticisms, they see the Council as the only available institution to channel funding through, and hope it can be reformed and strengthened in time to win the confidence of relevant parties. Given the difficult relations identified between this Council and opposition parties, the mismatch between the analysis and approach of external actors in this context seems problematic.

There are also examples where the analytical connections made between analysis of the context and assumptions for support are not always clear. For example, DFID's programmes in Latin America, aimed at strengthening governance and involving indirect bilateral funding, made an analytical connection between pro-poor policies and strong party systems. They appeared to assume that the more institutionalised parties are, and the more robust their party systems, the more they will pursue 'pro-poor' policies. However, this may not necessarily reflect contemporary political processes, and it implies that pro-poor is politically neutral, whereas in reality, a wide number of conflicting positions have claimed to be pro-poor, from the Washington consensus of 1990s to Morales in Bolivia and Correa in supporting state-capitalism in Ecuador.

Models aimed at supporting ideologically aligned parties, often through bilateral support and involving peer linkages, similarly reveal weaknesses where they do not pay close enough attention to the local context in their implementation. In large part, this is because the presumed ideological links upon which support is based are in practice very weak in some countries. In Uganda, for example, party representatives receiving support under this model commonly do not perceive this form of support to be about ideology. The nature of the political spectrum in Uganda remains fundamentally shaped by the recent history of internal conflict, ethnic and regional divisions and the no party Movement system. In practice, this means that parties in Uganda are not divided along party lines but rather according to regional, ethnic and

other divisions; and that they are most divided by fact that they are primarily vehicles for individuals to run for elections. The leading opposition party (the FDC) was formed by ex-members of the ruling party (the National Resistance Movement, NRM), disillusioned with the power concentration in the President and united in their opposition to the ruling regime rather than by an opposing ideology. This renders party identification and selection for assistance ad hoc and selective, effectively creating a lottery as to which parties are promoted or supported.

Interestingly in Georgia, this model receives more positive reviews, in that it is seen as allowing for a form of engagement based on political priorities and partisan choices rather than on neutral advice. In part, this may reflect the nature of the Georgian political spectrum (with most of the main parties aligned with Western, centre right ideologies) which may make it easier to pair up with their counterparts from Western European countries (such as the German Christian Democrats). In addition, Georgian alliances and networks with European parties, for example the European People's Party, are seen as a useful mechanism to connect to European counterparts at a time where the debate about possible pathways to EU membership is rapidly evolving. However, this support is still seen as short-term and not particularly strategic - exchange visits, for example, are seen as a useful chance to improve English rather than to significantly address party development.

In some of the countries studied, party foundations appear to have moved away targeting support at ideologically aligned parties. In Latin America, even the more traditional party foundations such as the German Stiftungun have moved towards multi-party activities and assistance. This is also the case in Nigeria and may reflect some recognition that ideological links are not a feasible approach in all contexts.

Overall, while external actors seems to have a relatively high understanding of some of the realities of the constraints for party assistance, in their methods of implementation they tend to recourse to technical, top-down and supply driven assistance that do not seem to be able to engage with the wider political context, incentives and dynamics. This does not mean, however, that there are no effective roles that external actors can play in relation to party assistance.

4.2   Strengths of party assistance

Some models, in their design and implementation, do appear to have sought to incrementally facilitate or address some of the incentives and power dynamics which shape political parties. This suggests a number of areas where party assistance could be further developed, including in terms of brokering relationships within and between parties; more targeted supported in areas of state/party fusion; and providing tailored support to capitalise on specific opportunities. All of this will require the maintenance of political economy analysis (including problem driven analysis) and 'political intelligence', which is explicitly designed to feed into the operational delivery of assistance.

A key area where party assistance seems better placed to interact with structural challenges and constraints is in terms of brokering or political engagement roles with political parties. In Latin America, a number of organisations have engaged in forms of policy and political dialogue with a range of political parties. For example, the NIMD (funded by the Netherlands government and Dutch party foundations) has a strong presence in the Andean region (including Bolivia, Ecuador) and Central America. It commonly works through local multi-party organisations such as the Agora in Ecuador and the Foundation for Multiparty Democracy (fBDM) in Bolivia which aim to facilitate political dialogue between political parties, and between parties and other relevant political actors including in relation to issues of constitutional reform.

In Nepal, a large number of policy dialogue initiatives are underway, which involve a range of parties and are aimed at supporting post conflict stabilisation and social inclusions. These are principally around the constitution process, or related to supporting the political engagement of specific groups (such as youth groups) and are funded by a range of external actors including the Norwegian government and the UK. Implementers active in this area include FES,

International IDEA and UNDP (through the Centre for Constitutional Dialogue in Nepal). One of the most interesting initiatives appears to be support for dialogue between youth groups in Nepal, as these groups have often been associated with the highest levels of violence and agitation, such as the radical elements in the Youth Communist League, the youth wing of the Maoist Party (see Box 3).

Box 3: Support for dialogue between youth groups in Nepal

Since autumn 2008, the Norwegian Embassy has been working with the youth wings of the eight largest political parties, in recognition of high levels of tension between these youth groups. The project seeks to bring youth wings together to engage in dialogue around common issues. In autumn 2009, it led to the production of a joint framework for national youth policy and there are plans to establish more joint working for youth wings at district levels. Funds are administered and overseen by a local consultancy organisation. According to interviews, this approach strengthened dialogue between parties in appropriate ways, including building a space to both air tensions and identify areas of cooperation.

In Georgia, the US supported the political change brought about by the Rose Revolution which resulted in the establishment of the current ruling party (UNM). US support was seen as fundamental in the lead up to and aftermath of the Rose Revolution, and in helping to maintain unity within the ruling party, particularly by brokering relations between three of the key figures involved in the Rose Revolution (namely current President Mikheil Saakashvili, former Prime Minister Zurab Zhvania and former Speaker of Parliament Nino Burjanadze). Since then, the US has broadened its support to all Georgian political parties, but the high level of engagement with the UNM in the early nineties remains a very distinctive example of a politically motivated, strategic and long-term form of party support.

A key factor that seems to explain success in this area appears to be targeting the right audiences, individuals and establishing specific purposes for any policy or political dialogue. In Georgia, for example, the support for the UNM during and after the Rose Revolution was aimed at the highest level, with high ranking diplomats and Washington 'movers and shakers' directly engaging the President and his closed circle of key advisers. In contrast, the Centre for Constitutional Dialogue (run by UNDP) in Nepal is questioned by some respondents for its focus on lower tier party members, as without key decision makers involved, the overall impact of policy dialogue processes may be minimal. Similarly, support has been provided to female party activists in Nepal, to facilitate cross-party linkages and networks. While this is seen as important, the lack of engagement with male party members on gender issues is seen as a key missing link.

It does not necessarily follow that for party assistance to be most effective, large scale programming or resources aimed solely at political parties is required. For example, in Georgia, money and formal programming do not seem to be a key variable to explain the success of some forms of assistance. If anything, low cost activities such as political dialogue, brokering and negotiating between political parties are seen as more valuable than more resource intensive projects. According to a number of interviews with party representatives in Georgia, what could make a real difference would be the 'serious money' needed to fund long term engagement through high level strategic advice with Western or regional experts. There may be good reasons why external actors would not be willing to supply this form of support, but in many people's minds this is what actually happened in the lead up and aftermath of the Rose Revolution. In addition, the UNM still has access to this kind of resource and they are still seen as in a strong position to access the strategic level of advice needed to maintain power.

A second area of potentially more effective party assistance seems to be where support engages more explicitly with the structural constraints within a given context. For example, the Deepening Democracy Programme in Uganda arguably goes further than most in recognising the challenges of the dominance of the ruling party, and the extent to which this undermines the ability of other political parties to access and use funds to build their party organisations.

The grant-making component is a particularly distinctive feature in this respect. Other implementers operating in Uganda, who do not provide direct support of this kind, stated in

interviews that direct grants might be relevant in Uganda, in light of challenges of the dominance of the ruling party and restricted access to funds, even though they would not usually support direct grants. This seems to be an example where the initial assumptions and analysis of assistance – that access to funding remains a significant blockage for party development – has led to new developments in implementation and funding. This reflects the importance of a process of design which allows for in-depth analysis and provides the space to think broadly about how some of the key structural challenges might be addressed.

At the same time, there are still some remaining challenges for this model. It was not clear, for example, whether the Deepening Democracy Programme in Uganda has an explicit strategy for how to engage with the ruling party in Uganda. At present, the NRM has not applied for a grant and it may not meet all requirements to qualify (for example, it does not always file accounts with the Electoral Commission). The Programme overall was reportedly delayed due to funder sensitivities over the grant making component, and it remains unclear what would happen if the NRM did apply for a grant. This seems to be problematic where a programme explicitly aims to address some of the wider constraints for parties but does not have a clear strategy for how to engage the ruling party.

A third area of more promising party assistance appears to be the provision of very tailored support to capitalise on specific opportunities. In Nepal, the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Accord and the acceptance by the Maoists of the need to transition to a political party may have opened up new opportunities for party assistance. In part, this reflects the need to work with the strategic interests of parties themselves - the Party Chairman of the Maoists (Pushpa Kamal Dahal) acknowledged that the transition to becoming a political party was a strategic move: "We did not foresee the possibility to capture the state power at centre through armed revolution alone" (cited in Hachhethu 2009). But this also opens up some room for manoeuvre, for example around aspects of the implementation of the peace process and for feeding into the constitution process, all of which provide useful entry points to working with political parties on specific issues.

Similar attempts to support negotiations between the ruling party and the opposition over political bottlenecks, such as electoral reform, have also occurred in Georgia, facilitated by international organisations or implementers such as NDI. While these attempts have the benefit of keeping some form of constructive dialogue between ruling party and opposition going, the results to date have been disappointing in large part because of the combination of extraordinary parliamentary powers of the ruling party and fundamental lack of incentives among the opposition to meaningfully negotiate realistic solutions. What does emerge from Georgia is the sense that parties may need to have reached a certain level in their development to benefitted from tailored support of this kind – to date, one party in particular (the Christian Democrats) appears to have benefitted the most because it is better placed than others to take advantage of the range of support on offer.

An underlying factor which seems to determine whether and how support is able to engage with structural constraints and contextual dynamics is the extent to which party assistance is informed by robust context analysis at design stage. Most of the external actors interviewed across each country had a fairly well informed view of the challenges of and for political parties, and of the power dynamics and incentive constraints in each context. The most advanced area appeared to be Latin America, where DFID commissioned a number of implementers of party assistance (including NDI) to undertake political economy analysis, including in Bolivia and Peru (NDI 2005). It also worked in collaboration with the Inter-American Development Bank, the World Bank, UNDP and International IDEA to support studies which identified the structures and incentives of political elite behaviour and party development (DFID 2008). However, across each country studied, a combination of formal studies and informal analysis and awareness appear to have been used by funders and implementers to build up a relatively accurate picture of the nature of the political system and political parties within this.

Nonetheless, this awareness and analysis does not always seem to have been integrated into the design and implementation of assistance. This can present some practical risks where

external actors enter arenas that they do not understand well and some funders and implementers appear to run the risk being seen as "pleasant friends, but distant outsiders to the real internal workings of the party" (Carothers 2008). A lack of understanding of these real internal workings may lead external actors to support political parties which are in fact politically irrelevant. For instance, in Venezuela, the Christian Democratic Party (COPEI) was supported by the Konrad Adenauer Foundation as its flagship program, but became irrelevant in current Venezuelan politics (Carothers 2006). Thus party volatility means that the target organisations often change and keeping up with these changing political environments can be challenging without linking solid networks and analysis to implementation.

The Deepening Democracy Programme in Uganda appears to have integrated analysis into implementation in a useful way. It uses a lengthy self assessment process to check grant eligibility, which cross-checks information from formal documents and financial information with phone interviews with randomly selected party members to identify a given party's strengths and weaknesses. This was initially conducted for all parties who wanted to take part (with only three initially found to be eligible). Confidential reports are produced for each party, reportedly providing a 'baseline' for party support. Grant applications need to refer to findings of the report, to show that grants address the weaknesses identified. This seems to be an interesting attempt to ensure that programmes do address the structural challenges and incentives for parties, as well as a potentially useful way of securing their buy-in.

4.3   Party assistance and wider political engagement

As the above analysis has shown, there are some examples across the case studies where the 'development' approach has dominated in assistance to political parties, including the development of large scale aid programmes (such as the Deepening Democracy Programme). These seem to usefully adopt more incremental approaches and seek to address some of the wider structural challenges, working with political parties as part of engagement with a number of actors and institutions. There are also examples of more explicitly 'political' approaches, including the high level political engagement between the US and Georgian politicians following the events of the Rose Revolution.[4] Both have their relative strengths and weaknesses, but what may be needed in some contexts is the greater combination of these approaches, particularly for the implementation of assistance.

In part, this reflects the relevance of different external actors according to context. In some countries, diplomatic actors have far more relevance than development ones. In Georgia, for example, Embassies are the primary external actors, partly because donor agencies do not have representation and because of the geo-political importance of Georgia in the region. In some countries, a range of other actors (such as oil actors in Nigeria or regional powers in Nepal) are particularly significant. In countries with relatively high levels of aid dependence, however, donor agencies can and do exert significant influence on domestic political processes and actors (inadvertently or otherwise).

In recent years, there has been growing attention paid to the extent to which aid relationships and wider development interventions impact on domestic politics, and recognition of the extent to which development processes are themselves fundamentally shaped by political processes (see IDS 2010). This puts the spotlight on donor agencies who now find themselves increasingly pushed to engage with political actors and to move away from the belief that purely technical approaches alone are possible in the countries in which they work.

Alongside this growing recognition, there remains a considerable gap in terms of understanding how this can be put into practice. Our case study research revealed that in some countries, donor agencies still prefer to focus on technical areas of support (for example, in particular social sectors) and on their relationships with government counterparts – examining the political impacts of their aid, and where development interventions might be strengthened through engagement with political actors and processes such as political parties

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[4] See also Carothers (2009) for a useful discussion of political versus developmental approaches.

still seems to be some way off. Nonetheless, the Deepening Democracy Programmes, which pool funds from a number of donor agencies, represent some recognition of the need for other approaches.

Understanding the complementarities between different actors is a related gap. Diplomatic actors have often developed longstanding relationships with political leadership and maintain up to date analysis of some political trends and pressure points. This is important, but it can at times lead to a narrow focus on political elites and formal institutions, as well as focusing on explicitly political issues and events (such as elections). Development actors can usefully complement this, situating democratisation within developmental processes and offering insights into informal processes and wider socio-political structures and challenges. Identifying key areas of synergy and complementary would appear to be a more useful way forward than the typical division put forward between political and technical/development roles, which no longer seems to hold true in the face of growing evidence of the linkages between political and developmental processes.

In general, the opportunities for building skills among development and diplomatic actors to more effectively analyse political dynamics together, and to allow them to more effectively build up the networks and forms of engagement to respond to those dynamics appear to be few and far between, despite being recognised as crucial in all of the countries analysed. However, some useful examples were identified, involving greater coordination among the different arms of government of external actors. In Nepal, for example, the UK's Joint Strategy and cross-department links reportedly work well in facilitating information across different actors (see Box 4). In Georgia, USAID and the political teams of the US Embassy meet weekly, along with NDI and IRI.

Box 4: UK Joint Strategy for Nepal

The UK's Joint Strategy for Nepal includes the FCO, DFID, and MoD. In practice, interviews revealed view that 'all parts of government were working in the same fields' in Nepal, reflecting a high degree of crossover on objectives and areas of assistance. Regular joint meetings are held to facilitate information sharing, and funds received from the UK's Conflict Prevention Pool.

One of the successes of the Deepening Democracy Programme in Uganda seems to have been that the staff in the PMU knew the context well, were able to engage formally and informally with parties on a regular basis, and were able to carry out and act on analysis. The brokering roles in Georgia are also reliant on strong formal and informal contacts and networks. The newer basket fund model in Nigeria seems to feature knowledge of context strongly, in part because the donor staff involved have strong local expertise and knowledge (and some have been in country, and involved in past programming in this area for some time). Having the appropriate staffing and expertise in place to ensure the best fit between context and mode of support chosen is therefore a priority.

However, it is not always the case that external actors maintain these skills and expertise. Across the board, many donor agencies in particular are currently seen as lacking in the capacity and skills to effectively monitor, analyse and engage with political contexts. For example in Nepal, limited capacity and time constraints of donor agencies are reported, alongside limited expertise in political analysis and forms of political engagement. Some felt that this is part of a division of labour (whereby an Embassy leads on politics and a development agency on technical implementation) but the case studies show that implementation must speak to the realities of context, therefore maintaining a somewhat false separation does not seem to be tenable. On the contrary, good collaboration between donor agency staff working with political parties and with political officers in Embassies seems to be essential for ensuring more coordinated efforts and effective results.

Whilst distinguishing between technical and political approaches to external party assistance does not seem to be a practical or realistic way to improve their effectiveness, it is important to recognise that it can be difficult in practice for the same external actors to reconcile a fundamentally political role. This involves brokering and negotiating political relations and

dialogue with a more technical role which characterises funding arrangements and relations. This reflects matters of principles related to maintaining neutrality and, more often, the kinds of skills, knowledge and networks required to engage in political negotiations, which can be quite different. In practice, organisations or individuals often end up specialising in one role or the other, or trying to navigate a balance between the two which does not always go hand in hand.

External actors seem to face some inevitable trade-offs between their desire to remain impartial or rather to not be seen as directly involved in domestic politics and the need to find ways of engaging with the political context and political actors if they want to be effective. Most funders of party assistance address these tensions by adopting an arm's length approach, often operating through an intermediary or implementing organisation. But this only partly addresses the fundamental tensions at the heart of international assistance to political parties.

4.4   Monitoring and evaluation

There remains a significant evidence gap in terms of the impact of party assistance. Across all of the case studies, there is a lack of evidence of robust approaches for measuring results. This reflects the common criticism that support to political parties has not gone hand in hand with adequate approaches to measurement of that support, including Power's contention that '…what is most striking about the field of party assistance is the almost complete absence of monitoring and evaluation' (Power 2008). Evaluations of implementers or funders have also heavily criticised the lack of frameworks and appropriate methodologies in this area (Erdmann 2005; Öhman et al 2004).

The weaknesses of current approaches to monitoring and evaluation seem to grow, in part, out of the approaches and methods set for party assistance. The activities commonly funded are output focused and capacity development orientated (including training, workshops and so on). This inevitably leads to very narrow measures such as of the numbers trained, or to rather meaningless attempts to measure wider behaviour change. For example, regarding support to women's political participation in Nepal, common measures cited include the number of women trained, the set up of cross party networks at district level, and the conduct of civic education and sensitisation activities. Some attempts are reportedly made to measure wider impact, for example through monitoring the number of women subsequently gaining representation on district committees or other positions of responsibility. But attribution of this measure is difficult against relatively minor training and other activities. Similarly in Uganda, attempts to measure levels of party institutionalisation, such as the use of polling to measure party support and measures of the number of candidates standing for each party, encountered significant attribution problems.

What complicates matters further is an apparent disjuncture between implementers 'micro' level objectives and evaluation, and the 'macro' level step changes expected from these inputs. Moreover, examples were given where wider structural challenges had undermined programmes (such as party factionalism, internal power struggles) but few examples were cited where projects had adjusted to respond to these challenges. Thus evaluation appears to occur at the end of project cycle, without the monitoring of impacts – and risks – throughout.

In addition to these challenges of attribution and measurement, the political sensitivities involved in these forms of support means that few evaluations are publicly available or could be accessed for this research. In light of these limitations, we offer a number of reflections and findings on effectiveness, but these should not be taken as a formal evaluation of party assistance.

Our research has identified a number of key priorities for improving monitoring and evaluation of party assistance. An important first step in strengthening monitoring and evaluation of party assistance is setting realistic objectives at the start, informed by strong context analysis. The analysis presented in this study makes clear that greater attention is needed to the wider political systems in which political parties operate and to the particular contexts which shape their incentives and power dynamics. More realistic objectives for party assistance should

move away from aspiring to build ideal type multi-party systems and instead seek incremental reforms, which take account of the structural constraints and challenges. Across the case studies, there is evidence of funders in particular requesting 'step-change' objectives which do not take full account of the starting points in many countries. More realistic approaches should also imply greater attention to understanding and managing risks, so that objectives can be adapted when conditions change.

The basket fund approach in Nigeria, for example, seemed to lack realistic objectives in its assumption that the Electoral Commission would be able to undergo the necessary transformation to become an autonomous organisation able to manage the electoral process and party regulation in a credible way. In reality, this reform of the Electoral Commission involves deeply political processes, and may be resisted by powerful elements of the governing elite. It is not clear that there is a clear risk strategy to monitor this, and to alert implementers and funders quickly to any potentially damaging implications of their support.

Secondly, more effective approaches seem to be those which can compare and triangulate information to build up a picture of the overall impact across a number of dimensions. The Deepening Democracy Programme in Uganda is a useful example of how this can be done in practice (see Box 5).

Box 5: Monitoring and evaluation in the Deepening Democracy Programme, Uganda

The Deepening Democracy Programme in Uganda uses a logframe structured around the institutionalisation of the multi-party system and levels of competition between parties. This is broken down into the measurement of the 'rootedness' of parties in society (using citizen surveys, proportions of votes to parties and to independents) of parties' internal democracy (measured principally through the holding of national delegates conferences, measurement of the organisational apparatus, and through the existence of mechanisms to manage intra-party conflict) and of inclusive inter-party dialogue (through the establishment of a forum). This provides baseline indicators and seems to have set realistic targets and timeframes which reflect the starting position. However, the logframe is rather unwieldy which could undermine its ability to be useful as a working document, and the assumptions and risks remain confined to the 'final column' of the logframe, with little sense of ongoing risk monitoring.

Key indicators include:
- The proportion of inter party competition increases in 2011 elections (and gap between top two parties narrows);
- Total votes cast for Independents reduces by 50%;
- More women party candidates compete for seats;
- All DDP supported parties hold a minimum of quarterly executive committee meetings at district and national levels;
- All DDP supported parties increase the depth of organisational presence in target areas (numbers of party agents, events, candidates);
- There is a reduction in party splits and fewer new parties in 2011 elections;
- 50% of citizens think parties listen to them 'always' or 'often';
- Inter-party dialogue has served as a mechanism for conflict resolution in run-up to 2011 elections.

Thirdly, learning from past experience is likely to be important. The Nigerian basket fund appeared to be based on previous basket fund experience, which recommended working with political parties on a number of fronts. In addition the UNDP, EU and DFID staff involved in developing the programmatic and operational aspects of the Nigerian programme have strong local expertise and knowledge, and in some cases have been involved in previous cycles of party assistance, which was reportedly useful in inputting into follow-up design.

Fourthly, party assistance is an area where the unintended and indirect impacts may be the most important ones to measure – particularly in relation to risks and responsiveness to context. This reinforces the importance of continuously and systematically testing assumptions and the analysis of context as well as the importance of cross-checking and triangulating information, including ensuring greater information exchange between external actors. This is particularly pertinent for some of the broader forms of assistance discussed in this report

(including the high level brokering in Georgia or support to policy dialogue or social inclusion which includes political parties in Nepal). The more diffuse the nature of this engagement the more it is likely to require more indirect measures.

Finally, while it is clearly important to understand the outputs, outcomes and impacts of donor support for political parties, it is important to acknowledge that no single methodology is likely to capture all aspects of a given intervention. It is therefore vital to combine approaches which can help to paint a more accurate picture not only on whether donors support to party support works or not, but crucially, how and why.

Theory-based evaluation can potentially be useful to better understand how and why party support works in practice (see Foresti et al., 2007; Uggla, 2007). Theory based approaches tend not to rely on the availability of suitable measurable indicators, placing significantly more emphasis on the underlying assumptions and logic of implementation and programmatic theories. By making explicit the often implicit theories of change underpinning donors' support, theory-based evaluations can help identify whether a given donor approach is or is not grounded in 'robust theories of how states and societies are transformed' (O'Neil et al., 2007a).

The use of theory as an entry point does not preclude discussion of results, but rather offers a potential explanation of performance or lack thereof. This approach allows for the testing of the goodness of fit between the assumptions underlying the models of change for each intervention and the actual implementation through a series of steps leading to results and change. This should allow for the identification of why the implementation logic of a given intervention might differ from the original programme theory. Key tools and techniques might include the use of mind mapping, flow diagrams, or problem trees and mappings of threats and opportunities (see IFAD 2002; Margoluis and Salafsky 1998; Foresti et al 2007). Another approach is outcome mapping, an approach to planning, monitoring, and evaluating social change initiatives developed by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) in Canada. It focuses on measuring the changes in behaviour, actions and relationships of those individuals, groups or organisations involved in an initiative. It also allows for an iterative process, so that learning can be fed back into programming (for more information, see Jones and Hearn 2009).

Fundamentally, despite the rhetoric about the importance of results, there appears to be little sign of results and impact being high on the agendas of external actors in this particular area of assistance. On the one hand, this could be interpreted as a worrying sign, but on the other hand, it may be based on a more realistic understanding that the role of external actors in supporting political parties is inevitably limited. Thus its potential may derive not so much from the effectiveness of individual projects, but rather from the overall approach external actors adopt in their engagement with the domestic political context, of which parties are an important, but by no means the most important, dimension. It may in fact be more helpful for efforts to assess results to consider these initiatives in the wider spectrum of activities that the international community supports in relation to political governance, rather than a narrow focus on funded projects to support parties per se.

5 Recommendations: Understanding when assistance works better and why

Taken together, our analysis suggests that political parties do matter, and should be considered an important missing piece of the puzzle of governance support. Not working with political parties as a matter of principle, in other words to remain neutral and avoid involvement in domestic politics, is a risky strategy as it effectively rules out working with potentially key actors. However, engaging with parties in isolation and as a separate set of actors, alongside civil society, parliaments, media and so on is also likely to be a mistake. Instead, support and engagement with political parties needs to be integrated into a wider

strategy to engage politically and as a part of the wider political system. This means that decisions about when and how to support political parties need to be taken in accordance with a wider analysis of the political systems, structural constraints and incentives. Accordingly, this section sets out a number of key recommendations for party assistance.

Growing recognition of the role political processes and actors play in development processes has contributed to a burgeoning of party assistance models and approaches. In practice, this has meant that there is now wide variety in terms of thematic areas of focus, funding modalities and methods of support. In general, many of the models of party assistance at face value seem to engage with the identified challenges for political parties in each context.

The most problematic area of support seems to be that which attempts to ideologically link political parties from different countries. While in a context like Georgia, this is potentially useful, especially with potential prospects of EU accession, in many parts of Africa, Asia and Latin America this does not seem to be an effective to approach to assistance. In reality it can lead to a lottery in terms of who receives support, where political spectrums do not correlate to those in western developed countries. Recognising that ideologically aligned party support is unlikely to be effective in many contexts is therefore an important first step.

For other models, challenges for effectiveness surface in their method of implementation rather than initial design. Across all of the models, we identified common recourse to top down, supply driven and narrow capacity development, and technical assistance approaches which could not or did not engage with wider incentives and political realities. This meant that in a context like Uganda, for example, the majority of political parties interviewed identified a lack of capacity and technical skills as major challenges, but there was also a strong sense that 'micro' level inputs, aimed at building capacity in a small number of technical areas, could not impact the wider (macro) challenges faced by parties, such as the challenges of a dominant party system and fusion between state and ruling party. In Nigeria, donor basket funding as part of support to governance and greater democratisation reveals strong understanding of the highly political challenges in Nigeria, but also a mismatch between this and recourse to top-down, supply driven technical assistance. This meant that support was targeted through the Inter-Party Advisory Council, seen by some political parties as a puppet institution of the ruling party, despite good analysis of the potential risks this might entail.

Some of the common methods of support to political parties therefore need to be rethought. For example, forms of targeted technical assistance can play important roles in party development (as seen in some of the support provided in Georgia), but it must be tailored to party needs and levels of capacity, and it likely to be most effective in contexts where some minimum levels of capacity are already in place. Generic courses across all parties are rarely useful, and short-term or one off training also appears to have limited value. Instead, political parties need (and request) long term and adaptable engagement, ideally in an 'advisory' rather than training format.

Rethinking methods and design needs to involve engagement with the incentives and capacities parties currently have. In recent years, the potential tool box in terms of the methods and funding modalities for party assistance seems to have usefully broadened. What is now needed is a more strategic approach to identifying the key themes, modalities and methods appropriate in each context. The Deepening Democracy Programme in Uganda arguably went further than most in recognising the challenges of the dominance of the ruling party, and the extent to which this undermines the ability of other political parties to access and use funds to build their party organisations. Introducing grant making for political parties alongside inter-party dialogue sought to engage with existing incentives and this is reinforced by strong and ongoing monitoring of the political context. This suggests that these newer forms of support should be considered as an option for other countries where party assistance is provided, particularly in contexts where there is fusion of party and state and low funding for opposition parties.

How can this be achieved? A key finding – in common with other analysis of governance and democracy support – is that **programme design must be underpinned by in-depth and**

ongoing context analysis. Any analysis needs to examine the functioning of the party system (and the wider political system) as a whole and to ask key questions in relation to the relationships between political parties and the exercise of power, as well as regarding the distribution of power among parties. Forms of political economy analysis, including problem driven analysis, can be helpful in asking these questions.[5] Problem driven political economy analysis allows for a drilling down into the core challenges or blockages for party development and facilitates the identification of the potential policy space in which external actors might support assistance which addresses these challenges.

Integrating context analysis into design and implementation of party assistance implies working at the party system level. In practice this means working on a cross party basis where possible, or setting programme objectives at the party system level (for example around inter-party dialogue or competition). Working at the party system level should better facilitate moving towards integrating engagement with political parties as part of wider political engagement in a given country. In some contexts, this may mean building stronger links between different areas of support to governance or democratisation. To some extent, the Deepening Democracy Programmes in Uganda and Nigeria attempt to do this. However, in practice there is little evidence of integration or overlap between the different components of these programmes (political parties, parliaments, civil society, and the media) suggesting that they may remain stuck at the level of their parts, rather than contributing to a wider 'sum'. In other contexts, integration may not mean building an overarching programme with multiple components but rather setting an overall strategy and vision which is then built across a number of projects, initiatives, forums for dialogue and so on.

Grounding support in context analysis can also widen the scope for party assistance. In some fragile contexts, in particular, it may be that political engagement and networking is far more effective than formal programming. This was particularly the case in post-conflict Nepal and in Georgia following the Rose Revolution, where external actors at key points in time seemed to be important brokers of political relations between and within political parties. For this form of engagement, money does not necessarily guarantee success. In fact this may be a 'low cost' area where less funding but more staffing and engagement is a better strategy[6].

A key factor that seems to explain success in party assistance in this area appears to be targeting the right audiences, individuals and establishing specific purposes for any policy or political dialogue. In Georgia, for example, support was aimed at the highest level, with high ranking diplomats and Washington 'movers and shakers' directly engaging the President and his closed circle of key advisers; In Nepal, support to youth wings of political parties (previously engaged in some of the most serious fighting) helped open channels of communication and dialogue as part of post-conflict stabilisation processes.

Growing recognition of the role political actors can play in development processes also make it increasingly necessary to **identify areas of complementarity between diplomatic and development actors in some contexts.** Diplomatic actors can have longstanding relationships with political leadership and maintain up to date analysis of political trends and pressure points. Development actors can usefully complement this, offering insights into wider socio-political structures and challenges. Identifying key areas of synergy and complementary would appear to be a more useful way forward than the typical division between political and technical/development roles, which no longer seems to hold true in the face of growing evidence of the linkages between political and developmental processes.

Across all of the case studies there is a clear need to strengthen monitoring and evaluation of party assistance. The weaknesses of current approaches to monitoring and

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[5] Political economy analysis focuses on understanding the links between politics and the economy, with an emphasis on power relations, incentives, formal and informal processes. Problem driven political economy analysis implies a focus on specific problems to understand why particular reforms might not have gained traction or to identify what could be done differently to move forward. Booth and Golooba-Mutebi have developed a three layered approach to problem driven analysis, which 1) seeks to understand behaviour by identifying systemic constraints (structural settings, historical legacies, power relations and institutions or rules) 2) looks at institutions in terms of actors' decision logics and choices and 3) locates the room-for-manoeuvre arising from dynamic features of change processes (See Booth and Golooba-Mutebi 2009).

[6] See ODI's Georgia case study report, (Foresti et al 2010), as a case in point.

evaluation seem to grow, in part, out of the objectives and approaches set for assistance. The activities funded are commonly output focused and capacity development orientated (including training, workshops and so on). This inevitably leads to very narrow measures such as of the numbers trained, or to rather meaningless attempts to measure wider behaviour change, contributing to a disjuncture between implementers 'micro' level objectives and evaluation, and the 'macro' level step changes expected from these inputs.

Moving towards more effective monitoring and evaluation should involve **efforts to compare and triangulate information to build up a picture of the overall impact** across a number of dimensions. This means combining key indicators of impact, such as the institutionalisation of the party system and levels of party competitiveness, and using multiple sources of information. While there are big debates on the utility of logframes, it needs to be borne in mind that these are simply frameworks which capture tools of measurement – of far greater concern, should be capturing what can (and cannot) be measured in each context. The examination of indirect and unintended impacts, not just expected effects, is key and evaluation could usefully be used to test programme theories and overall intervention logics, rather than a narrow focus on results. Finally, too little use is made of the lessons which can be learnt from past programming; drawing on past evaluations or informal reviews of past experience can be valuable in ensuring that mistakes are not repeated.

Interestingly, despite the rhetoric about the importance of results, there appears to be little sign of results and impact being high on the agendas of external actors in this particular. On the one hand, this could be interpreted as a worrying sign, but it may also reflect **a more realistic understanding that the role of external actors in supporting political actors such as parties is inevitably limited**. Thus its potential may derive not so much from the effectiveness of individual projects, but rather from the overall approach external actors adopt in their engagement with the domestic political context, of which parties are an important, but by no means the most important, dimension.

Finally, **a number of skill sets and capacities are needed to effectively engage with domestic politics** and political actors such as political parties. This involves strengthening skills in political economy analysis and the ongoing monitoring of political context, to allow for adaptation to changing conditions; building formal and informal networks, including with key power brokers within political parties and outside political parties; and strengthening expertise in political engagement, including roles in convening, facilitating, and at times brokering between and within political parties across a range of external actors.

Overall, while we recognise that party development is ultimately an endogenous and internally driven process, these recommendations suggest that external actors can do more to better understand political actors and contexts and that once this is in place, there are a number of ways in which they could more effectively engage with those actors and processes going forward.

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Annex 1: Models of support to political parties

Theme	Modality	Methods	Main donors and implementers	Countries
Democratisation	Bilateral, direct or indirect	Capacity development Technical assistance	NDI (USAID) IRI (USAID) FES EU Delegation UK Embassy SIDA	Uganda Nepal Georgia Nigeria Latin America
Ideological alignment	Bilateral, often direct	Peer links Capacity development	WFD Swedish Christian Democrats, KAS, Friedrich Naumann	Uganda Georgia Nigeria Nepal Latin America
Democratisation Governance	Basket fund support	Capacity development Grant making Inter party dialogue	UK, Sweden, Denmark, Netherlands, Ireland UNDP, EU, CIDA NIMD	Uganda Nigeria
Post conflict stabilisation	Bilateral, direct or indirect	Inter party dialogue	International IDEA, FES, CCD, NIMD Norwegian government, DFID, DANIDA,	Nepal Parts of Latin America Georgia
Social inclusion	Bilateral, direct or indirect	Inter party dialogue Capacity development	NDI, International IDEA, IPWA USAID, DFID	Nepal Nigeria Latin America
Democratisation Post conflict stabilisation	Bilateral, direct or indirect	Political engagement/ High level guidance and brokering	British Embassy, American Embassy	Nepal Georgia Latin America