Supporting Political Party Systems – Experiences and Challenges

Content

Introduction

The Division of Democratic Governance of Sida and the Collegium for Development Studies at Uppsala University organised a joint workshop on *Supporting Political Party Systems – Experiences and Challenges,* at Hammarskog Conference Center, outside Uppsala, on October 13, 2004.

The overall purpose of the workshop was to discuss international community efforts to support the emergence of functioning party systems in so-called developing and transition countries. To provide a background, the state of affairs of political party systems in such countries was briefly analysed. The format was informal and off the record to provide the best possible platform for frank and focused discussion. There were no formal speeches by each participant but a format providing plenty of time for an exchange of ideas.

Thomas Carothers, Director of the Democracy and Rule of Law Programme at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace,

Olle Törnquist, Professor at the Department of Political Science, Oslo University, and *Lars Svåsand,* Professor at the Department of Comparative Politics, University of Bergen, were all asked to provide some food for thought and initiate our discussions.

Participants included representatives of the Swedish party affiliated organisations, the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, staff members of Sida's Division for Democratic Governance and other Divisions of the Agency, representatives of International IDEA as well as Swedish academia.

The workshop was an integral part of a series of conferences and workshops on democracy/democratization/democracy promotion assistance organised jointly by Sida's Division for Democratic Governance and the Collegium for Development Studies at Uppsala University. In 2005, a conference on Violent Conflicts – Risks and Opportunities was organised. Previous conferences have covered Democracy, Power and Partnership (2002), Democracy as Actual Practice (2003) and Political Corruption and Democracy – the Role of Development Assistance (2004). In 2003 a workshop on power analyses was organised. Reports from these events can be ordered from the Collegium or found on the Collegium website, www.kus.uu.se, or Sida's website, www.sida.se.

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Political Party Aid: Summary of Discussion

This is a summary of the discussion which followed presentations by Thomas Carothers, Lars Svåsand, and Olle Törnquist

The discussion followed Carothers' presentation, which laid emphasis on two main issues: first, the problem of weak representation with which many political parties in the third world struggle, and secondly, the motivation for party reform.

To deal with these issues successfully, Carothers concluded that one first has to determine if it is best to work with political parties directly or at the party system level.

Are parties the same everywhere?

One point raised in the discussion was whether parties from Eastern Europe really differ from those in developing countries, as Carothers claims they do. The argument made was that parties indeed have a lot of similarities despite geographical differences; they work with the same issues, same policy reforms, same strategies etc. According to Carothers however, despite all similarities, there are also fundamental differences reflecting the different societies and contexts in which these parties operate. He argued that countries such as Guatemala are facing completely different problems of party development from those in Eastern Europe.

It was pointed out that such differences between parties can also be found within the former socialist bloc. Quite a few East and Central European countries have fairly stable party systems and the parties are ideologically similar to Western European parties, while others of the former Soviet Union countries have extremely unstable party systems with a high percentage of independents. Differences are, however, also present in developed democracies.

Advantages of Party Aid

Another point raised by several participants was that cooperation is much more likely to be successful when it is based on common values or a common ideology, as is the case with party to party aid. Common values lead to mutual understanding and trust, which are a prerequisite if changes towards deeper democracy are to take place. It was also argued that it is only the parties themselves that can change the system. According to Carothers, however, it is often civil society and not the parties

that pushes parties to change. In fact, parties are often not interested in changing their own system since that can threaten their power.

It was also argued that fraternal party aid has a role to play given the fact that it is more difficult and sensitive for one state to tell another state what to do than it is for one party to support a sister party. It is also easier for parties to work with parties directly than with party systems. Another aspect highlighted was that an important source of information and enthusiasm coming from youth organizations working with foreign sister parties would be lost, should the fraternal party aid disappear. However, the overall question is not whether parties working with parties is legitimate and good, but whether it should be the task of states to promote cooperation between parties, since parties are not agents of the state.

Attention was drawn to the fact that the agendas in donor countries and recipient countries often differ significantly. Whereas donors normally have high expectations on the parties' roles in the democratization process in terms of fighting corruption, promoting transparency etc, the expectations from the constituents are often much more modest. Given this consideration, it was suggested that the donors might be expecting too much from the parties. It was also argued that the lack of trust in parties works on two levels; there is a lack of trust between parties and their constituents at the same time as parties themselves lack trust in the political system.

Advantages of Party System Aid

Another point made by several participants was that fraternal party aid and party system aid do not exclude each other, but are complementary. When working on broader issues such as change of the electoral system, one has to cooperate with many parties. One party cannot, and sometimes dare not, change the political behavior on its own. Supporting efforts on both levels is costly though and requires more resources than donor parties can bring about. According to Carothers, however, adopting this view can obscure the fact that parties in many countries do not function at all. Therefore, one has to give some serious thought to the overall context in the country before walking in and offering fraternal aid.

The need for party system support rather than direct party aid was also emphasized by a participant from a developing country. There is no need to help individual parties unless there is a functioning regulatory framework and an electoral system, which is seldom the case in the recipient countries. The problem is not how the parties' perform but whether the system allows them to perform at all; that is, to have elections and to mobilize votes etc. Helping the parties is not important at this stage and this is true for most developing countries.

There is an increasing donor interest in different forms of party aid, both from individual donor countries as well as from multilateral intergovernmental organizations. The tendency is to take the broader party system approach.

The Role of Party Internationals

Another issue that came up for discussion was what role Party Internationals can possibly play. Today, Party Internationals play a role in establishing fraternal relations. They also set standards and international norms for how parties should behave in a democratic organization, but they have a limited role in channeling resources. Perhaps the Internationals also have a role to play in softer aspects such as development of policy, ideological discussion, and policy alternatives? It was also argued

that Party Internationals have a role in exchanging values and ideas. The problem with party legitimacy is often the result of a lack of democratic knowledge than of resources. In this field Internationals have an important role to play by formulating standards and setting conditions in the areas like for instance human rights. Turkey's effort to join the EU is a good example.

The Role of Foundations

Another question raised was that given the fact that party systems are often not working very well, how useful are the party foundations in party system aid? Only some of them are equipped with enough resources to take on larger issues of structural change (National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, NDI, for example). There is an ongoing debate in the EU about whether political parties, their foundations and politicians should develop a greater capacity in order to take on these broader issues and play a bigger role in building democracy. This is however difficult to coordinate since the many party foundations in Europe are difficult to bring together. Because of the coordination difficulties, there is an ongoing discussion about creating something new on a European level to address this task.

It was also pointed out that one should not underestimate the work of small foundations. Although they have limited means, they often have a lot of knowledge that can make a big difference and work on the local level is important in the actual exchange of knowledge.

Party system Restructuring in Malawi in the 2004 Election: Can and Should International Party Assistance Play a Role?

Svåsand began the second topic of the day with a brief overview of the present situation in Malawi. He described a political situation with increasing party fragmentation and immense political instability, where politicians striving to get into presidential or governmental power cause the Malawi party system to suffer from fusions and fissions. Because of the parliament's weakness in comparison with presidential power, most politicians today are only concerned with competing for the presidential chair and a cabinet position is only seen as a second best option. Parties have in a sense turned into vehicles for individuals seeking to gain power.

The general suggestion from Svåsand was that institutions rather than volatile parties should be supported in order to promote democracy (in Malawi). When politicians have confidence in the institutions and the rule of law, they are more inclined to think long term and stay loyal to their parties and hence create a more stable political scene.

Is there anything we can do?

The following discussion concentrated mainly on the possible ways to tackle difficult situations such as the one described in Malawi. There was a general agreement that the parliament's relatively weak position in relation to the presidential office in many African countries constitutes a major concern and that resources should be invested in strengthening the parliaments. In the discussion, the dilemma over thresholds to representation in parliament was brought up; on the one hand there is a wish to bring in new parties, but this may on the other hand lead to fragmentation and political instability.

One of the participants suggested that Malawi exemplified a hopeless situation which practitioners turn their backs to, as they prefer to focus on problems they have a chance to influence, e.g. Bosnia where young

people are not currently voting in elections. That problem is easier to affect and change.

The participants did not fully agree on the appropriate way to target the Malawi case. Svåsand suggested that broad scale support in order to strengthen the country's institutions was the most suitable thing to do, but critical voices were raised concerning multiparty aid. One participant pointed out that bureaucracy was also a problem and another questioned whether multiparty aid was the correct model for Sweden. Before taking a stand in favor of multiparty aid, there should be a serious evaluation of the IMD (Institute for Multiparty Democracy) and the work it has done.

In response, Svåsand said that it was not his intention to give the impression that party to party support was unnecessary, but that it may not be sufficient where the major issues are constitutional. As an example, he turned to Zambia, where the political actors have understood that the political system is structurally deficient. Svåsand argued that the politicians in Malawi have to realize that as well.

Political Marginalization and Democratic Capacity Building

Törnquist's presentation was based on case studies from the Kerala region in India, the Philippines and Indonesia. He argued that the objective of democratization aid should be more than creating a formal democratic structure and emphasized the need for a substantial human rights based democracy. Substantial democracy is, however, not necessarily achieved through fraternal support, since the parties themselves are often a part of the problem. Törnquist suggested that support for institutions promoting political capacity building, together with more empirical studies on how democratization actually takes place, could be better ways to address the problem of substantial democratisation. In this way, ordinary citizens and human rights and pro-democracy activists in particular, would also stand a chance within mainstream politics.

Fraternal Aid Contributes to Pluralism and Democracy?

It was generally agreed that pluralism is essential for a democratic society, but opinions differed on how much one should have a right to intervene in other countries' domestic affairs. One participant maintained that Sweden has a long record of influencing the political scene in other countries and mentioned Tanzania as an example. Swedish aid to the Tanzanian state has helped the tightly knit leading party to remain in power, the participant argued. Belarus was mentioned as an example of a delicate situation where the international community is unsure of how to act. Fraternal party aid is prohibited and NGO's are blocked from operating in the country, but should the international community respect that or does it have a responsibility to support people struggling for democracy in non-democratic countries? Commenting on the case of Belarus, one participant pointed out that whereas the democratization process had started, it did not receive sufficient support from the international community. In this case maybe the wrong forces were supported. Therefore, it must be right to support *various* democratic forces in order to make democracy prevail. The participant maintained that it is not wrong to export political attitudes; they are necessary in a democracy.

The necessity of supporting political parties was also stressed for another reason, namely because of their responsibility for society as a whole. A great deal of support has in recent times gone to civil society, but, it was argued, civil society has the shortcoming of only focusing on one issue at a time.

Törnquist did not argue against these statements, but stressed the importance of evaluation of fraternal support in order to see if it really leads to promotion of democracy. Parties need to show how their aid leads to human rights based democracy and not only to the strengthening of their sister parties and their ideologies. He, too, was worried about the single issue orientation, but one cannot assume that parties, parliament and other institutions by themselves promote democracy. Törnquist also underlined the importance of a public dicussion about who should do what. Obviously, some things are better done by institutions like Sida and others by political parties, and quite often they could cooperate.

Control, Accountability and Financing

Much of the discussion also focused on the need for accountability, transparency and public access. There seemed to be general agreement about the necessity for these elements, but opinions varied as to how to achieve them. However, it was also argued that secrecy and opacity might be justified in situations when this is the only way to operate; South Africa during apartheid was mentioned as an example. Törnquist argued that the key was that at that time there was a sufficiently wide public debate and agreement, in Sweden as well as internationally, that the ANC was the major and most solid actor in favor of human rights based democracy in South Africa.

Better criteria for accountability were called for and regulations about disclosure and international funding presented as one possible solution. It was concluded that a lot more work has to be done in regard to public access and also that political judgment plays a key factor. If the voters do not like what is happening, they will punish those responsible.

Törnquist argued for accountability for all actors involved in democratization aid or political party aid. Fraternal aid should not come from public money already allotted for the development aid support of human rights based democracy in general, but from the parties themselves, which might then draw on private funding and the general public support for parties and their activities in Sweden and elsewhere. He claimed that intervention is an extremely sensitive issue and just as the state cannot give direct support to companies, it should not do so to parties either. The participants then asked themselves where substantial funding should come from, if not from individuals, syndicates or the state.

In response to this question, Törnquist urged all those involved to put all their cards on the table and drew the attention to what could happen if anyone undermined these procedures. If we work in favor of human rights based democracy, everyone involved needs to uphold our system of accountability, Törnquist concluded.

Looking Ahead

Support of south to south cooperation was recommended as one way to proceed in the future. Törnquist mentioned the Philippines and the good governance program there, among others supported by the Olof Palme International Center. He claimed that the Swedish parties have an important role to play, but pointed out that their work has to be part of a broader framework.

Concluding Remarks

Summing up the workshop's theme, Carothers concluded that politics by its very nature has a partisan quality. He commented on the fact that development aid over many years has helped parties stay in power,

but claimed that fraternal aid is even more sensitive. He argued that we would not accept outsiders intervening in our political sphere, so we cannot expect our support in other countries to be received without controversy. Given that partisan aid is such a controversial issue in recipient countries, he suggested that we needed to be more honest and maybe less prescriptive on such a sensitive issue.

Carothers also called for cooperation between all actors involved, practitioners as well as academics, in order to find solutions to new problems where old solutions do not work.

Svåsand reflected over the workshop theme by concluding that even though fraternal aid is a sensitive issue, there are two main reasons why one should assist political parties. Firstly, because a large scale democracy according to current belief, is not possible without political parties, and secondly, in spite of the trend of favoring civil society, political parties are more concerned with the coordination of polices than civil society.

Svåsand concluded with three observations:
– We need to be country sensitive. Well tailored solutions to every individual case demands coordination between parties and countries.
– Political party aid is a part of democracy aid.
– Small countries like Sweden should be involved in direct partisan assistance because they can provide alternatives to the large countries and the large foundations.

Törnquist summarized the day by asserting that there was a general agreement on the fact that many new countries are facing a crisis of democratization. He also considered the discussion about democratization had been too technocratic when democracy is, to a great extent, a political process. In line with Carothers, Törnquist also emphasized the risk of specifically partisan political interventions in a way we would not accept in our own countries. He suggested that state sponsored interventions through the development aid budget had to be limited to support of human rights based democracy in general. It should not involve partisan foreign or domestic interests in special ways of designing the instruments of such a democracy or in making use of those interests, for e.g. a leftist or rightist agenda. Instead, it should assist with the promotion of generally pro-democratic but otherwise non-partisan studies, based on the needs of the local pro-democrats, of the problems and options involved. Finally, he concurred with the previous speakers' calls for more coordination and cooperation between those involved, i.e. between development aid workers at Sida, politicians and academics.

One of the participants summarized the general opinion:
– We are promoting democratic governance on both sides, politically as well as academically. Parties can communicate with friends and colleagues in a different way from the state, and academics can contribute with knowledge as to how to make institutions better. We need to support studies as well as gain experience in order to carry forward the work that has to be done.

Political Party Aid: Issues for Reflection and Discussion

November 2004
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I.   Party Troubles

Democratization is facing serious challenges in almost every part of the world where democratic transitions were launched during the past twenty years. These challenges range widely. Some countries once thought to be democratizing are slipping back to authoritarian or semiauthoritarian rule. Others have achieved successful, successive elections yet their new pluralistic systems are performing poorly, failing to translate democratic forms into democratic substance, and thereby alienating their citizens. In still other cases, democratic transitions are undermined by continued or new civil conflict.

The struggles of democratization in the later years of democracy's "Third Wave" should not be a surprise. Creating new political practices and institutions built on principles of representativity, accountability, and freedom is slow and hard, even in the best of circumstances. And the rapid spread of attempted democratic transitions in Latin America, sub-Saharan Africa, Asia, and the former Soviet bloc of the past twenty years has meant that democracy is being tried out in many countries that lack the underlying social, economic, and political characteristics commonly thought to favor democratization.

Although the range of partial or "hyphenated democracy" in these countries is wide, a striking commonality exists among them. Citizens of almost every struggling or new democracy are deeply unhappy with their political parties. With remarkable and dispiriting consistency, political parties are named in public opinion polls as the least respected socio-political institution in countries all across the developing and postcommunist worlds. In some countries, fewer than 10 percent of citizens express any confidence or belief in political parties.

Not only is a low regard for political parties extremely common, but the specific complaints that citizens have about their political parties are strikingly similar across these many different countries. The complaints add up to a standard tale of woe which can be summarized as followed:

Parties are perceived as corrupt, self-interested organizations that

relentlessly work to maximize their own welfare with no real concern for ordinary citizens. They are seen as elitist organizations run by self-appointed leaders who are in politics out of greed and ambition. Citizens see little real difference among the main parties in their countries; the parties do not seem to stand for anything and whatever ideological labels are affixed to the parties are either just historical holdovers or empty symbols. The parties appear to waste vast amounts of energy and time in constant infighting with each other, squabbling over petty things out of a ritualistic, unproductive tendency to turn every issue into a partisan conflict. And citizens believe that parties do a bad job of governing once in power, not only because the parties look after their own interests rather than the country's but also because they lack people qualified in governance.

Undoubtedly parties in every country are not necessarily as feckless, corrupt, and dysfunctional as citizens believe them to be. And parties often get the blame for shortcomings or problems that are not necessarily their fault, such as poor state performance or weak economic growth. Nevertheless even a quick look at parties in many struggling or new democracies reveals major flaws along the lines described above. And in many countries the problems of parties are severe, whether it is the de facto purchasing by predatory business elites of some parties in Ukraine, the near collapse of the party system in Peru, the sidelining of parties in Nepal, the debilitating infighting of parties in Bangladesh, and so forth.

The unpopularity of parties leads to their being punished by voters. Many countries experience a high level of voting volatility, with voters feeling little loyalty toward parties and shifting their vote in each election from party to party. Parties that come to power, outside of countries where dominant parties have gained a firm hold on power, often serve only one term and then are crushed in the next elections as dissatisfied voters move on in search of something better. The unexpected success in some elections of non-party figures or persons outside the traditional parties, such as Hugo Chavez in Venezuela, Simeon Saxe-Coburg Gotha in Bulgaria, Vladimir Putin in Russia, and Rios Montt in Guatemala, is another sign of the weakness of parties. And many new or struggling democracies face declining voter turnout across successive elections, which can partially be ascribed to the low regard in which parties are held.

Given the central functions that parties are supposed to play in a democracy, the weak state of parties in many developing and postcommunist countries is a serious problem for democratization. Above all, the shaky state of parties contributes significantly to the inadequate aggregation and representation of interests which is such a debilitating problem in so many new and struggling democracies. Large sectors of the citizenry often feel that their political system, though nominally democratic, is uninterested in and unresponsive to their needs. Troubled parties also fail to socialize citizens into the democratic process, not creating links with citizens beyond the appeal for votes every few years when an election takes place. Furthermore, problematic parties, when called upon to take part in legislatures or help fill executive positions and govern, import their internal problems, ranging from corruption and infighting to rigid internal hierarchies and unqualified persons – into the state apparatus.

II. Aid for Political Parties[1]

A. Providers of Party Aid and Their Funders

Most political party aid is carried out by party institutes or foundations associated with West European or American political parties. These organizations vary dramatically in size from some of the German *Stiftungen* and American political party institutes that have hundreds of staff members, budgets in the tens of millions of euros, and offices in dozens of countries, to some of the small institutes associated with some European parties that have one or two staff members, budgets under one million euros and no foreign offices.

The funding sources for these institutes or foundations vary but are generally one or more of the following:

– Direct funding from the national legislature

– The home country's bilateral aid agency

– The home country's foreign ministry

– A special foundation or endowment set up to provide funding for party institutes (such as the Westminster Foundation for Democracy or the National Endowment for Democracy)

– Private money raised by the party itself

In addition to these national institutions devoted to party aid, some international institutions are beginning work in this area as well. The Organization of American States, for example, has party aid programs in Central America and sponsors the regional Political Party Forum. The United Nations Development Programme has begun to work with political parties as part of its efforts to promote national dialogue processes.

Party aid is carried out throughout most of the developing world and postcommunist world where countries have moved at least partially away from authoritarian rule. Over the past decade, it has been much more extensive in Central and Eastern Europe than anywhere else, with probably approximately half of Western party aid going to that region. Smaller but still significant amounts of party aid go to parts of the former Soviet Union, Latin America, and Africa. Only very small amounts go to the Middle East and Asia.

B. Types of Party Aid

The most common type of party aid is assistance that seeks *to help a party build or strengthen its basic party organization.* This usually consists of efforts across a range of associated areas, such as (1) training central and local level party cadres in membership building, grassroots outreach, political platform development, communication methods, fundraising, and center-branch relations. (2) pushing and helping the party to increase the amount of internal democracy in the party, (3) assisting in the development of women's and youth wings of the party, (4) exposing party cadres and leaders to methods of party organizing and functioning in established Western democracies. In some cases it includes minor amounts of material assistance such as fax machines, or other office equipment,

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1 The analysis of political party aid in this paper is primarily based on desk research and field research that I carried out in 2003 and 2004, including interviews with representatives of party aid organizations based in various Western capitals (including Stockholm, The Hague, London, and Washington) as well with a variety of people involved in party activities (political party leaders and activists, members of parliament, political analysts and scholars, journalists, and local representatives of Western party aid organizations) in Romania, Russia, Nepal, Indonesia, Guatemala, and Mozambique. I carried out between 20 and 40 interviews in each of the case study countries

money for printing of party materials, or money for party members to travel to internal training programs, or abroad on study tours.

The second most common type of party aid is assistance *to bolster a party's capacity to participate in an electoral campaign.* This usually involves training efforts to help a party become more effective at message development, media relations, fundraising, voter mobilization, candidate selection and candidate preparation, volunteer recruitment and deployment, coalition building, polling, and general campaign strategy and management. Such aid is usually carried out in the six to twelve month period prior to elections. It typically stops sometime before the actual elections, usually around a month or a few weeks before.

A more specialized, less extensive form of party aid directly relates to elections but is distinct from campaign-related aid. It is assistance *to help parties participate effectively in the actual election process,* which usually includes training of party pollwatchers and in some cases support for technical assistance for party members who are on national election commissions.

An additional type of party aid is training *to help parties that are represented in national legislatures how to be effective members of such bodies.* This consists of training in legislative drafting, constituency relations, anti-corruption, negotiations and coalition building, and parliamentary rules of operation. Such aid overlaps with the broader category of legislative assistance, which also includes aid not targeted at parties as participants in legislatures, but at the institutions themselves (focusing on issues such as staff development, committee formation, public relations, parliamentary budgeting, parliamentary information offices, etc.).

There is also an increasing amount of party aid work not directly aimed at strengthening individual parties through interventions with the parties but rather at strengthening overall party systems. This aid is discussed in Section V below.

C.   Goals of Party Aid

Party aid organizations tend not to make their goals very explicit beyond general statements that they are seeking to strengthen the parties they are working with. They proceed from a conception of "strong parties" or "good parties" that is implicit in their activities but rarely spelled out in much detail.

Observation of the actual efforts of party aid programs in many countries leads me to conclude that most political party aid providers generally are trying to help foster a common set of characteristics in the parties they work with. These characteristics are listed on the model party template detailed in Figure 1 (at end).

Interestingly, although the political parties in the various countries that sponsor political party aid vary greatly (Swedish and American political parties, for example, are obviously quite different), the party aid programs developed by these different countries all seem to adhere to the same template for party building. Generally speaking this template appears to correspond most closely to a northern European political party model, one that is quite traditional in its basic features and reflects the idea of parties in a pre-television age when parties depended almost exclusively on grassroots organizations to build support. It is not surprising that European party institutes seek especially to reproduce European style parties around the world. American political party institutes do the same and thus promote an ideal of a strong or good party that is quite different from the actual nature of American political parties. A striking feature that emerges from a cross-regional look at political party aid

is how similar such aid is coming from party aid actors that draw upon very different party traditions. Equally striking is the fact that party aid programs look basically the same on the ground all over the world, no matter how different the political contexts and traditions of the places where the programs are carried out.

D. The Core Method

Although party aid is a growing domain, with new institutions entering the field and looking for new types of ways to help parties, a core method still dominates. A high percentage of party aid (probably over 75%) consists of training seminars and other technical assistance for people working in political parties in the recipient countries. The classic method is the short (one to three days) training seminar led by a foreign trainer – usually a political consultant, member of parliament, party official, or other political expert from the country sponsoring the training. These seminars attempts to transfer some Western know-how about party organization or campaigning to a group of party officials, usually either mid-level cadres from the party's central organization, or regional branch activists. In some cases, the transfer of Western know-how is attempted not through a training seminar but instead through a consultative process in which the visiting Western expert seeks to spend some time over a more sustained period with relevant people in the target party to teach them about platform development, public outreach, or whatever the particular skill in question is. When the party aid organization has an office in the country which it is aiding, the country representative often develops personal ties with party counterparts and carries out informal consultations with them.

The other forms of aid – such as study tours to sponsoring countries and modest material aid – are supplements to the core training method, and are often used to build good relations with party elites and therefore facilitate participation of party cadres and activists in the training sessions. Study tours also have a training purpose of their own, as another way to try to transfer Western know-how to parties.

E. Single-party and Multiparty Aid

Most assistance efforts to strengthen parties in other countries follow either a fraternal party approach or a multiparty method. The fraternal party approach consists of a Western party institute or foundation building a relationship with a party in a developing or postcommunist country on the basis of assumed ideological kinship – liberal party with liberal party, social democratic party with social democratic party, etc. Usually it is an exclusive relationship; the Western party organization chooses just one party to aid on a fraternal basis. Sometimes this choice is related to which party in the recipient country is a member of the corresponding party international. The assumption is that the different party institutes from the aid-providing country in question will develop relationships with their various counterpart parties in the receiving country, thereby ensuring a multipartisan diversity of the assistance in the country.

In the multiparty method, the party aid organization works with a number of parties at once. It may bring different parties together in joint training sessions or hold single-party training sessions with multiple parties over the assistance period. In many democratizing countries there are a very large number of parties and the multiparty method requires coosing to work with some parties but not others. Criteria vary for deciding which parties will be included in the assistance. One com-

mon approach is to work with all parties represented in the parliament. Another is to work with all parties that are democratic, i.e. those that do not espouse an anti-democratic ideology and accept the basic political rules of the game.

Very generally speaking, European party aid organizations favor the fraternal party method (though the Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy is an exception) while the U.S. party institutes tend to utilize the multiparty method (though in some countries they have worked principally with only one party, or one coalition of parties). International institutions entering the party aid domain gravitate toward the multiparty method.

III.   Issues for Discussion

A.   A Mythic Model?

Looking at the list of political party characteristics that party aid programs seeks to promote in new or struggling democracies, it is hard to escape the impression that party aid is based on a highly idealized or even mythicized conception of what political parties are like in established democracies. Although some parties in a small number of OECD countries may have most of the characteristics set out in Figure 1, most do not. Many parties in the established democracies countries are not, for example, very internally democratic, are highly personalistic in their external image and internal functioning, do not maintain regular contacts with voters beyond elections, do not have clear ideological definition, do not give women a strong role in the party, and do not do a good job of incorporating youth in the party.

A party aid advocate might reply to this by saying that of course few parties conform fully to the ideal but it is important to have a coherent aspiration. Moreover, many areas of democracy aid suffer, to at least some degree, from the problem of pursuing idealized models – such as programs which expect aid-receiving countries to develop efficient, effective judiciaries and parliaments, to have strong, independent NGO sectors, and to have consistently high voter turnouts – that established democracies themselves often do not live up to. Yet there is still a troubling sense with party aid that the assistance efforts seek to create something in new and struggling democracies that exists at best only very partially, or rarely in much older, more established democracies.

Western party aid seems to be based on a old-fashioned idea of how political parties were in some earlier, more virtuous era, before the rise of television-driven, image-centric, personality-driven politics, the diminution of direct links between parties and voters, the blurring and fading of traditional ideological lines, and the growing cynicism about partisan politics that characterize political life in many established democracies. Some party aid practitioners might believe that parties in new and struggling democracies can first be helped to develop the way parties used to be in many established democracies and then worry at some later time about the corrosive effects of technology and postmodern culture on party politics. But this would be a mechanistic, stage-based idea of development that does not correspond to reality. The reality is that although new and struggling democracies are trying to consolidate the basic institutions of democracy that many OECD countries consolidated many decades (or longer) ago, at the same time they are confronting the effects of television-driven, image-centric politics. In some sense therefore they are forced to grapple simultaneously with the challenges of both modernism and postmodernism in political party development.

The fact that party aid follows an implicit institutional template – a relatively standardized, detailed, and fixed idea of what a good political party is – raises the same two important questions that confront other areas of democracy aid in which template methods are common (such as parliamentary assistance and judicial aid). First, does the use of such a template lead party aid providers to have low tolerance for local differences and to unconsciously (or consciously) insist on trying to reproduce parties that look basically the same no matter how different or varied the local political contexts are? And second, in focusing on the characteristics they would like to see parties in new or struggling democracies have, are party aid providers ignoring the underlying economic, socio-cultural, and other structural determinants of party development? That is to say, are they assuming that merely by working with the parties themselves (as opposed to trying to address some of these underlying structures and conditions) they can produce parties that conform to the Western ideal?

B.   Improving the Core Method

When I interview people in political parties on the receiving end of international party aid, I find a striking critical consensus regarding the core method of such aid, i.e. the short-term training programs typically led by visiting foreign experts. So striking is this consensus that it appears as another "standard tale of woe" parallel in some ways to the one that citizens of new or struggling democracies express about their political parties.

One extremely common complaint concerns the foreign trainers who lead the seminars. Such trainers are often viewed by the persons they are training as having little understanding of the local context and an irrepressible tendency to suggest approaches and solutions that are designed in their home country but not necessarily suited to a different terrain. It is also commonly said by trainees that these trainers underestimate the level of knowledge of the people they are training, mistaking the poor socio-economic conditions for a low level of political knowledge or assuming that the troubled state of parties must be caused by a lack of understanding of what parties might or should be.

Another major complaint is with the supply-driven nature of much of this sort of training and the one-off nature of the training efforts. Too often, local party representatives say, the idea for the seminars comes from the party aid organizations rather than from the local parties, with a consequent low sense of local ownership in the program, and, in the view of the parties being trained, a lack of connection between what is offered to them and what they believe they really need. The one-off nature of many of the trainings, and the lack of follow-up, results in little lasting effect on the parties.

Party officials also report that the wrong people often end up going to the training seminars. Party leaders use the trainings (especially foreign study tours) to reward people they owe favors to. Or they send marginal people to the sessions out of a desire to avoid influential middle-level people getting training that they may try to use to push for changes from the leadership. Key senior people rarely take part in the trainings, feeling above such exercises.

Participants in trainings also frequently criticize the events for being too lecture oriented and not using more active learning methods such as role playing, practical trials, and active discussions. They are especially critical of efforts to teach party doctrine, finding them too abstract, uninteresting, and often impractical.

Some party aid organizations have tried to move away from the

tired, standard method of training, though it is not clear how widespread improvements actually are. Many party aid groups for example say they have moved away from using one-time visiting Westerners to do the training. Instead they use either (1) Western trainers who have spent some significant time in the country and know the local scene; (2) third country experts who have relevant experience from another country that has undergone similar political developments; or (3) local trainers who have received instruction in the relevant subject, often through training of trainers initiatives.

Party aid organizations tend to insist they have moved away from the bad habit of supply-driven training, that they consult extensively with political parties about their needs and interests before going ahead with training seminars and that they often develop a counterpart person in their party partner who takes responsibility for coming up with idea for trainings. Some organizations (such as NIMD) have parties apply for funds to carry out training, with the idea that this process of application and approval will improve local ownership of the training exercises.

To alleviate the problem of one-off training events, some party aid organizations are investing instead in training efforts that reach a smaller number of people over a longer period, such as leadership schools for young party activists. And party organizations say that they are learning to avoid straight lecture format trainings and increasingly using more active learning methods.

Several main questions remain about this issue of the core training method. How extensive are these reformed methods and how much are party aid groups still falling back on the standard method? How much do the improved methods strengthen the process of knowledge transmission and overcome the larger fatigue on the part of many parties in new or struggling democracies with the overall effort by Western groups to train them?

C.   Comparing the Fraternal and Multiparty Methods

Both the fraternal and multiparty methods have advantages and disadvantages, and the local contexts of party aid vary so much as to ensure that one method is not necessarily better or more appropriate overall.

The primary advantage of the fraternal method is that the common ideological link between the provider party institute and receiver political party may be the basis for a bond that will make cooperation more effective. Party organizations which use the fraternal method assert that their partner parties in new or struggling democracies feel that they can trust them more because they know it is a potential long-term partnership rooted in ideological fraternity. This trust, they say, is essential to gaining access and influence within the parties that they are trying to help. Furthermore, party organizations using the fraternal method also feel they can be more effective helping parties with a similar ideological orientation because they will tend to understand the particular challenges of such parties. For example, a right-of-center party institute may know better how to help a right-of-center party in a developing country reach a business constituency better than a left-of-center party institute would.

Another advantage of the fraternal method is that it helps connect parties in the developing and postcommunist worlds to the party internationals, which is useful for socializing parties into the international networks and norms of political party life. Often it is Western party institutes in developing or postcommunist countries that introduce parties to the party internationals and facilitate their entry into them.

The fraternal party model faces a major disadvantage or limitation. In many parts of the developing world and the postcommunist worlds (especially the former Soviet Union), parties do not divide along ideological lines that correspond to the main European ideological groupings, or even along a left-right axis at all. As a result, Western party institutes cannot find natural ideological partners in many countries. Insisting on the fraternal party method in such contexts, which are numerous, leads either to artificial attempts to read a particular ideological orientation into certain parties or very spotty coverage of the main parties. Even when some parties in new or struggling democracies do fall into the conventional ideological groupings, there are often many more parties that do not. If Western party aid organizations only work with the former parties they will be excluding a large number of parties.

The fraternal method also often results in a partisan approach, which can be controversial in the recipient country and potentially distortive of the domestic political scene. A decision by a Western party institute to work with just one party in a multiparty system constitutes a partisan approach. The assumption is that other party institutes from the same provider country will choose to work with other parties, balancing out the aid in a multipartisan way. Yet given limited budgets and incomplete global coverage, often the other party institutes of the provider country will not decide to work in that country, leaving the assistance from that country unbalanced. Moreover, the party institutes in provider countries themselves do not reflect an even partisan balance and thus will project their own partisan orientation onto other countries. If a provider country, for example, is traditionally dominated by a strong right-of-center party, the funding of its party institutes will likely be such that if they follow the fraternal method, that country will be giving much more support to right-of-center parties abroad than to other parties.

An additional problem with the fraternal party method is that it sometimes produces party aid that is not really much about helping strengthen parties (or democracy) in other countries but instead serves other interests of the aid-providing country. My interviews with representatives of some West European party institutes, for example, made clear that some of the West European party aid to Central and Eastern Europe is motivated less by an interest in promoting democracy *per se* than in developing party partners who can join West European party coalitions in the European Parliament. Also, some West European party institutes, particularly the German *Stiftungen* and the international departments of the British political parties, sometimes use fraternal party aid to build relations with foreign politicians, officials, or parties for the sake of facilitating diplomatic relations with or pursuing certain interests in those countries. This is not necessarily a bad thing in and of itself but it should not be confused with party aid that primarily aims to strengthen parties and build democracy in other countries.

With regard to the multiparty method, its main advantage is its inclusiveness. The inclusiveness allows party aid providers to avoid partisanship, which can be a major benefit in many political contexts. By working with all the major parties in a country, a party aid actor can often be relatively assertive and far-reaching in its work without setting off political alarm bells in the country.

The multiparty method facilitates efforts by the aid provider to think about the overall problems of parties in the country as a whole. This can be useful to help stimulate the external aid actors to confront all factors shaping the evolution of parties in the country rather than to continue

training one party at a time under the assumption that the main obstacles and solution to party development lie only with the parties themselves. In this way, the multiparty method can help lead to the development of new types of efforts to strengthen the overall party system in a country rather than just the individual parties.

The main disadvantage of the multiparty method is the greater difficulty of creating a very close party-to-party relationship between the provider and recipient. The value of such relationships is open to debate but adherents of the method believe that such relationships are crucial to gaining real influence inside the party to push for important internal reforms. On the other hand, party institutes that use the multiparty method believe that over time they can develop quite close relationships with some parties in a country even though they are helping several or even many parties in the country simultaneously.

D.   Partisanship in Party Aid

When asked about partisanship, providers of party aid are usually quick to say that their work is non-partisan. Aid agencies like USAID that fund such work tend to have official policies of non-partisanship. In reality, however, party aid is often partisan. I do not view this as necessarily a bad thing but I think it would be preferable if providers of party aid would recognize this reality more openly and make sure they have thought through all the ramifications of it.

Generally speaking, there are two major types of partisanship in party aid. The first sometimes arises in European party assistance that uses the fraternal party method. As discussed above, although the work of any one party institute using this method is partisan, the intention is for such aid to be part of a larger multipartisan framework. But in practice, the aid from any one providing country sometimes does not reach all of the major parties in a recipient country; overall it reflects the partisan weighting of the providing country, which is itself usually not evenly balanced. Fraternal party aid therefore, in practice often favors one or more parties at the expense of others.

When asked about the partisan nature of their work, persons working in West European party institutes tend to downplay it at first. They start by noting that multiple party institutes from their country engage in such work. When it is pointed out that in fact in many recipient countries one particular party from the aid-providing country is much more involved than others, they turn to other arguments. They may, for example, draw a distinction between campaign-related work and party building work and say that they do the latter rather than the former, and therefore are not really affecting the outcome of elections. They also argue that they stop their work some time before any elections, such as a few weeks or a month, to avoid direct influence on the campaign. Yet they acknowledge, when asked, that a party which manages to strengthen itself organizationally will likely be more effective in building support and doing well in a campaign. Therefore almost any effective party aid should almost by definition affect the performance of parties in elections.

In my experience, representatives of West European party aid organizations, when pressed on the point of partisanship, will acknowledge that their efforts do have a partisan quality but they will not be greatly troubled by it. Persons who work for party institutes tend to believe in the cause of their party. Representatives of a social democratic party tend to believe that every country in the world should have a social democratic party, or a party that follows those basic principles. Persons working at

a conservative party institute tend to feel the same about the value of conservative parties. What, they ask, is wrong with promoting political values they believe in, values that appear to have very wide applicability? Unlike persons working in bilateral or multilateral development agencies, persons who work in Western party institutes are not developmentalists or diplomats. They are political actors and as such have less concern about possible violations of sovereignty or neutrality that arise in doing political work across borders. In fact they see cross-border political work as a fact of life that is already well-established and not very controversial, even as developmentalists cringe at funding anything that might be seen as directly affecting the outcome of a foreign election. They tend not to ask, as I think they should, how this party aid which favors one or more parties at the expense of others is perceived in the recipient countries. And they tend not to face the question of why, if it is of unquestionable value, most countries that sponsor party aid strictly prohibit any other country from doing the same in their own borders.

The other type of partisanship in party aid is more visible. It tends to exist in U.S. rather than European party aid efforts (though it is not unknown in the latter). It comes when party aid is directed to one or more parties that are facing an opponent – either a ruling party or another party competing for power – that the party aid provider believes is non-democratic. This kind of partisan aid has been most common in postcommunist contexts. In Eastern Europe in the 1990s, for example, the International Republican Institute (IRI) supported center-right parties against their left-of-center opponents in Albania, Bulgaria, and Romania, with the specific intention of improving the chances of those parties gaining and holding onto power and knowing that there was no corresponding U.S. aid to the other parties. In Russia and some other countries in the former Soviet Union, both IRI and the National Democratic Institute (NDI) have engaged in partisan aid aimed at helping opposition parties trying to challenge rulers or ruling parties. And in some cases, such as in Serbia in the late 1990s and Belarus in 2000, party aid is part of relatively explicit U.S.-government funded efforts to unseat disliked (by the United States) leaders. These efforts combine party aid with targeted civil society and media aid as well as diplomatic pressure. Partisan aid has not only occurred in postcommunist contexts. IRI, for example, has engaged in partisan aid in Haiti and Cambodia, supporting opposition parties working against leaders or ruling parties IRI felt were not democratic.

The principal justification of this sort of oppositional partisan aid is that the assistance seeks to strengthen democratic political forces working against non-democratic rulers or parties. The argument therefore is that such aid is not really partisan in the sense of interfering with voters' choice between democratic alternatives but is rather aid to strengthen democracy against non-democracy.

This justification tends to satisfy some persons (in the United States at least), especially when the party aid is directed against political figures like Slobodan Milosevic or Alexander Lukashenko. And the party aid efforts directed against those leaders were part of broader assistance and diplomatic campaigns that various European and multilateral organizations joined in as well. The case for partisan opposition aid becomes less certain when the political campaign is not against a clearly non-democratic figure or party, but rather against a party whose democratic values are merely distrusted by the particular external actors involved. Such was the situation in Bulgaria and Romania in the 1990s when U.S. aid

went to the opponents of the former communists, i.e. against political forces that were not dictatorial in nature.

E.   The Relationship of Parties to Civil Society

One very common problem with political parties in new and struggling democracies is their lack of connection to civil society. When asked about their relationships with civil society, party elites usually have little to say. In parallel fashion, when asked about ties between their organizations and political parties, civil society leaders typically disparage the idea.

As party aid representatives go deeper trying to strengthen parties in the developing and postcommunist worlds, they encounter this divide between parties and civil society. And as they do, they are increasingly seeking to do something about it. Their response is often to create special programs to bring political party people together with civil society representatives, with the idea that if the two sides can get to know each other better and learn about each other's perspectives, each will better understand the importance of working with the other and will pursue new ties with the other. Thus party aid groups organize forums or roundtables to bring the two sides in contact with each other, sometimes at the national level, sometimes at the local level.

These efforts, while certainly not harmful, have not yet shown themselves to produce very much change. Civil society representatives who go to such meetings often come out of them complaining that the political parties just want to dominate or use them for their own political purposes, and have no interest in real partnerships. Political party representatives, in turn, complain that the people on the civil society side are uninterested in collaboration and look down on political parties.

Some of the problem with the attempts to create more cooperation between parties and civil society comes from the relatively narrow definition of civil society that many aid organizations use, especially those working on democracy aid. In looking at civil society they tend to focus on NGOs, particularly the circle of Western- funded advocacy NGOs and social service NGOs, rather than on the much broader range of formal and informal social organizations that make up civil society. People who work in the donor-funded NGO sector tend to have gravitated to that sector to avoid partisan politics. They usually have a very negative view of political parties as being corrupt, dishonest, and self-interested, and they wish to keep their organizations from being tainted by association with them. Moreover, in the 1990s, when much new aid began flowing to the NGO sector in new or struggling democracies, donors were telling these civil society groups that it was best to stay away from partisan politics and to cultivate neutrality and technocratic excellence. The civil society activists are somewhat surprised to be getting the opposite message now from providers.

To take forward the idea of promoting greater ties between civil society and political parties, party aid actors will need to think through some of the issues more deeply. To start with, they need to explore in more detail the question of what kinds of relations they would like to see civil society organizations develop with parties, and which parts of civil society are most likely to seek such relations. In some established democracies, parts of civil society have quite deep relations with parties (such as unions that are intertwined with social democratic parties or, in some cases, environmental or women's organizations that work directly to endorse and support one party in an election) while other parts of civil society keep their distance. Given the highly conflictive nature of parti-

san politics in many new or struggling democracies, it is not surprising that advocacy or service NGOs will not want to be seen as aligned with any one party (the consequences for them if their party loses might be disastrous). Yet other groups more oriented toward broad membership and mobilization, such as teachers organizations, or indigenous persons organizations, might well find it useful to engage in strategic mobilization with parties. In short, both party aid and civil society aid representatives will have to move away from formulaic ideas like "civil society should be politically neutral" or "parties and civil society need to work together more" and really examine what they mean and what they want in detail and in relation to the reality of the local contexts.

F.   The Relative Absence of Evaluations

In my interviews with representatives of Western party institutes I have been struck by how rarely these organizations evaluate their own work. When I ask about evaluations, most people in party institutes just shrug their shoulders and say their institutes do not do evaluations, either because of cost or for unnamed reasons. USAID missions sometimes carry out evaluations of IRI or NDI work that they have funded. The only party aid organization that appears to regularly evaluate its own work is the Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy.

The lack of evaluations is striking considering how many uncertainties linger in donor agencies and other organizations about the value of party aid. People who work in the party institutes do not seem very troubled by the lack of evaluations. They are generally convinced of the intrinsic value of their work, proceeding from the following set of assumptions: 1) parties are essential to democracy; 2) the best way to strengthen parties in weak democracies is to go directly to the parties that exist and offer them training and other support; and 3) there are no other organizations better qualified to do that than successful political parties, i.e. the parties that the party institutes are based in. Thus although they sometimes recognize in private that their aid meets a lot of obstacles and frustrations on the ground, they believe it is intrinsically valuable and do not see any alternative approach to the problem.

People in party institutes are also wary about evaluations because donor agencies and foreign ministries that are the likely sponsors of such exercises often push for quantitative or other narrowly focused methods of attempting to measure the impact of aid. Quantitative evaluation methods do not work very well in most areas of democracy assistance, but they are especially problematic when it comes to the domain of party aid due to the very organic and fluid ways parties are organized internally and how they function. Representatives of party institutes also tend to feel that no one outside political parties can really understand or assess their work properly, and that most people outside parties tend to be too harsh in their judgments about parties, and do not accept the fact that politics is inevitably a messy, imperfect business.

Although the reasons party institutes tend to be wary of evaluations are understandable in some ways, clearly there is a shortage of systematic learning and review in this area. Given their misgiving about evaluations forced on them from the outside, it is incumbent on party institutes to develop credible methods of assessing party aid and to apply those methods to their own work.

IV.   The Challenge of Party Reform

Party aid providers often report success in providing assistance that is valued by people within parties – training programs that participants

say are useful and appreciated, advice and counsel to party officials that is met with genuine interest, study tours that are cited as very helpful in exposing people to new ideas, material aid that is put to immediate use, and so forth. Yet a look at the evolution of parties in countries where party aid providers have been operating, as well as conversations with party aid providers who have been working in various countries, make clear that party aid seems to produce rather modest and incremental changes, at best, in the overall functioning and character of the parties it reaches. In fact, it appears that in many cases party aid tends to bounce off the parties it targets, and that many parties in new or struggling democracies remain seriously problematic despite years, or even decades of foreign assistance directed at them.

Undoubtedly there is much more to be said and learned about the ways party aid has or has not helped produce the reform of parties in particular countries. The point here is simply that parties are clearly not easy entities to help change and the question of how party aid aims to change parties and why and how parties respond to such efforts deserves exploration.

Like most areas of democracy aid, party aid uses training and advice as the principal motors of intended change. Stated very simply, the core idea is that by transferring new ideas to people within parties about how parties can and should function, those people will change their behavior in accordance with these new ideas and in so doing will change their parties as well.

In practice, this core approach to change comes in three variants, aimed at producing change from the bottom, middle, or top of parties:

– Training programs for local or provincial level party activists in party branches, both to promote change at the local level of the party and then encourage that change to "work its way up" in the party to change the party overall. For example, training may be directed at local-level candidates to teach them how to carry out grassroots campaigning with the idea that if such campaigning is carried out and is successful, the central hierarchy in the party will see the benefit of it and incorporate it as a main part of the party's approach.

– Training programs for middle and senior level party cadres in the central party hierarchy to introduce them to new ideas, encourage them to adopt new methods, and push the party leaderships to make reforms.

– Advice and counsel (rather than training) for party leaders and the top leadership circle to explain the need for reforms in the party and the kinds of reforms that are possible and desirable, and to encourage them to carry out some reforms.

Despite these different-level approaches, and the often quite persistent application of them over time, the hoped-for reforms in the targeted parties often do not occur. There appear to be two main reasons for this: (1) the party leadership often blocks the reforms; and (2) elements of the political context in which the parties are operating make the reforms difficult.

A.   Leadership Blockages
For reasons that will not be elaborated here, most political parties that have formed during the last twenty years in new or struggling democracies are what might be called, for lack of a better term, "leader parties." They are organized around a strong leader who exerts dominant con-

trol over the party – the leader chooses who is on the party's executive council, determines who will be candidates in legislative and other races, controls the party finances, makes the main decisions about themes, campaigns, platforms, and so forth. Although leader parties often develop relatively extensive internal structures, the informal lines of control emanating from the leader predominate. The leader-centric nature of the parties is often reinforced by the fact that the parties are operating in cultures in which deference to hierarchical authority is strong. It is also fueled by the fact that most new parties in these countries are financed by a small number of wealthy business patrons who develop direct personal ties to the party leaders. The narrow range of sources of money for the party, and their concentration in the hands of the party leader, greatly increase the power of the leader.

Although occasionally leaders of such parties are reformers who welcome internal party reforms and dedicate themselves to party institutionalization, in most cases they do not. Usually those leaders resist changes coming from the bottom and middle of the party and do not initiate significant internal reforms themselves. Why is this the case, given that the reforms that party aid providers prescribe are, in a larger sense, intended to strengthen the parties and make them more effective?

The main answer is that party leaders in these sorts of highly centralized parties resist reforms and institutionalization because they fear losing power and control. Internal democracy may mean they lose their place at the top. Meritocratic or democratic selection of legislative candidates removes an important perquisite or lever that leaders like to control. Empowering local branches diminishes the authority of the leader. Making party finances more accountable takes the power of the purse out of the leader's secret control.

Party leaders also resist the sort of institutionalizing reforms that party aid supports for other reasons. The leaders are usually focused narrowly on the next election. Long-term reforms such as strengthening local party chapters or developing internal training capacity for party cadres appear to be very low priorities or even appear as distractions from the immediate electoral task at hand. Such leaders often see themselves as the essence of the party and assume that their reputation or image is responsible for the party's support in the country. In such a mindset, developing the internal organizational structures of the party is of little interest. And in some cases, party leaders resist prescribed reforms because they simply do not share the values underlying the reforms. They may nod in agreement when visiting foreigners talk with them about the importance of giving women a greater role in the party, for example, but often their hearts are not behind the idea.

B.   Other Obstacles

It is not only the stubbornness of party leaders, however, that makes reform of political parties so difficult. The underlying political and economic contexts in which parties in new or struggling democracies operate produce many obstacles to party strengthening. Just to name a few:

- In poor societies most parties are usually short of funds and cannot afford many of the sorts of institutionalization measures external aid providers recommend (internal training capacity, strong local branches, etc.)
- Although outsiders tell parties that they should have more developed party platforms and clearer ideological definition, the fact is that citizens in many new or struggling democracies (just as in many established democracies) often base their vote on candidates' images

and personality. Citizens are impatient with ideological positioning and mostly just want competence, or charisma. It is not clear therefore how much weak parties should invest of their scarce resources in platform development.

– Many new or struggling democracies face a profound citizen disaffection from politics due both to the legacies of authoritarian rule and the messiness of life in an attempted democratic transition. The task for parties of building ties with citizens is extremely difficult, defeating normal grassroots organizing methods.

– The weak rule of law that exists in many postcommunist and developing countries makes it hard for parties to carry out reforms that depend on a well-functioning rule of law, such as reforms of party financing, or establishing rules for internal democratization. Predatory actors, such as powerful business elites are able to subvert such reforms to ensure their own interests.

– In many new or struggling democracies, the media is reflexively critical of political parties, not just for merited reasons, but as a populist posture that corresponds with the public's prejudices and helps the media build an audience. Parties seeking to improve their ties with the media and the public are stymied by the continual negative publicity they receive.

Some political scientists who study political parties reach pessimistic conclusions about the very possibility of party reform. Examining the problematic evolution of Latin American political parties in recent decades, for example, Michael Coppedge suggests that party replacement (parties dying after repeated decisive electoral defeats and new parties arising in their place) is a more likely path to party change than party reform. But the point of the analysis in this section is not a counsel of despair suggesting that party aid is futile. Rather it is that all aid which seeks to stimulate reform in political institutions or other key institutions is very difficult. All important institutions in a country – whether the judiciary, the parliament, the labor unions, the national election commission, or any other frequent focus of democracy aid – usually have significant internal reasons (rational or irrational) to resist what may seem like perfectly logical, productive reforms to outside aid providers. And the environments in which the institutions operate also tend to be rife with elements that make reform difficult. As with all areas of democracy aid, party aid has to move beyond the assumption that training alone will be a major driver of change and look more closely at the internal incentives and disincentives for change within and around political parties and craft assistance strategies that reflect these realities.

V.   Strengthening Political Party Systems

A.   Reforming the Legal Framework

As concern for the troubled state of political parties in many developing and postcommunist countries broadens and deepens, some persons trying to find ways to help strengthen parties are looking beyond aid to parties per se to see if it is possible to help strengthen party *systems*. Aid providers do not usually draw upon any well-defined criteria of what is a good party system, but rather seem to proceed from the idea that is an extension of their model for political parties: a good party system is a collection of some moderate number (perhaps between two and eight) of major parties (parties that have at least some of the desired characteris-

tics of parties listed in Figure 1) that compete peacefully and lawfully on a relatively level playing field, and avoid ideological extremes while still offering citizens some distinct choices.

Such efforts to date have tended to focus on the laws and rules governing the operation of parties, with the idea that reforms in those laws and rules may be able to help change the ways parties organize and function.

One such area is that of electoral laws. They have been the focus of elections-related assistance in many democratizing countries during the past 20 years. Although political scientists have done considerable work on the interaction of types of electoral systems and types of political parties, aid work relating to electoral law reform has mostly been done more with a view to the elections-specific administration issues than shaping certain kinds of party development.

It is possible that in some countries electoral law reform might be an area of focus for party aid providers looking to try to change the configuration or types of parties. It is an area that bears further exploration. Yet it also has some substantial obstacles. Most importantly, it is hardly up to aid providers in most developing or postcommunist countries to push for electoral law reform. Such reforms are very basic and go to the core power issues in the country. The key political forces in the countries, though they do not always know the ins and outs of different choices in electoral law reform, are usually well aware of the potential consequences of reform measures and are very unlikely to work for reforms that may threaten their power. Such reforms usually take place at major junctures when the system has been broken open by larger political events, not when external aid providers decide it might be a good idea.

Another area of focus for those interested in trying to change the underlying laws and rules that shape parties is political party law reform. There is some increased attention to political party laws by aid providers, based on the idea that some of the core problems of parties must be related at least in part to the legal ordering of the party domain. The hope is that reform of the political party law of a country may be a way to cure some of the endemic problems with parties.

A recent example of donor-supported political party law reform occurred in Peru. The main Peruvian political parties, helped by a sophisticated technical assistance effort on the part of Transparencia, a major democracy NGO (with international support from various sources including International IDEA), successfully pushed for the enactment of a new political party law. To reduce the fragmentation of Peru's political party system it raises the petition signature threshold for the registration of parties and requires parties to have offices in many parts of the country. One of the principal goals is to discourage the multiplication of many small parties or regional parties. The law also provides for future public financing of parties.

The Peruvian law embodies what is probably the most common emphasis of political party law reform, at least as pushed by outside actors looking to help improve the shape of the political party system: raising thresholds to discourage the formation of smaller parties. It is important to note that such reforms are hardly all benign. Russian President Vladimir Putin pushed through a party law reform in the period before the 2003 parliamentary elections, using the same sort of threshold raising measures, with the purpose of reducing the number of opposition parties and strengthening his centralizing grip on the country. From the perspective of the smaller Peruvian parties, the Peruvian reform was hardly pro-democratic. In their view, it was an effort by a closed circle

of discredited political elites to wall off their hold on power against the growing assault of new political forces. Thus we must be wary of the notion that there is any such thing as a neutral, pro-democratic form of political party law reform or that such reforms are not in most cases efforts by entrenched powerholders to protect their own position.

Furthermore, although it is possible that changes in a party law, such as those in Peru, may influence the shape of the party system, it is not clear that such law-induced changes are necessarily very important. If the underlying problem is a failure of the main parties to successfully represent the interests of average Peruvians and to govern effectively, shutting out small parties is hardly likely to do much to solve the problem. Seen in this light, the party law reform appears to treat a symptom (fragmentation) of the core problem (failure of representation) rather than the problem itself.

Clearly much more work needs to be done to assess the experiences of countries that have made changes in their party laws in terms of what impact those changes actually had on the development, configuration, and functioning of the political parties in the country. From such empirical studies, aid providers will be able to extract knowledge that may allow them to refine efforts to support party law reform in ways that do help strengthen party development.

B.   Interparty Dialogues

Another aid intervention at the level of the overall party system, as opposed to with individual parties, are interparty dialogues. These dialogues attempt to improve communication and relationship-building among the parties in a country. Starting in the late 1980s, some efforts were made to foster interparty dialogues to help parties work out election planning issues, often to help parties negotiate jointly with the national election commission. These were usually short-term initiatives limited to the very specific issues of the election context.

In recent years, several organizations (such as the Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Development and UNDP) have been working to promote interparty dialogues on a somewhat broader basis, as a methodology of its own, not directly related to party strengthening work. These dialogues sometimes include all the parties in a country and other times just the parliamentary parties, or some other subset of all the parties in the country. They sometimes bring together party leaders, other times mid or senior level party cadres.

These efforts have two broad, inter-related goals. First, they seek to improve communication among the parties, to break down barriers and create personal links among party leaders or cadres and to provide a regular opportunity for them to know each other better and talk to each other. The underlying idea is that more communication among the parties will lead to better functioning of the political system. Debilitating political confrontations and standoffs will be nipped in the bud, more decisions can be made on the basis of informal consensus, the commonalities among the parties can be explored and made good use of, and so forth.

Second, they aim to get the parties working together to study and then take remedial measures, at a systemic level, of deficiencies in the party system. The idea is to get the parties as a group to realize and take some real responsibility for the troubled state of parties in the country, and also to take some concrete measures (like party financing reform or political party law reform) to improve it. Usually the external aid organization plays some role not just in getting the parties together but also pro-

viding some technical assistance to steer them toward possible remedial measures they might take.

The utility of interparty dialogues seems clearest in postconflict countries where the main political forces are usually at odds, with sharp, bitter lines drawn between them, and often serious personal enmity or incomprehension among contending party elites. Just getting these elites in the same room, talking civilly with each other on issues of national significance is often a breakthrough of sorts. Participants from postconflict countries in such exercises consistently report that they find utility in getting to know and working with persons from opposing political groupings.

The utility is less clear in countries whose politics are not marked by a deep rift between the main political forces. In such contexts, the general goal of increasing interparty communication finds traction less easily. Often the parties already engage in quite a bit of interparty back and forth, in national and local legislatures and other forums. And in some countries, many citizens feel that the political elites from different parties are already communicating too much with each other, in complicitous ways, and in doing so are cutting themselves off from ordinary people. In such situations, fostering yet more interparty dialogue requires a very careful look at whether it serves any real purpose.

Efforts to help parties identify and then work together on reform projects also presents various challenges. To start with, the parties may view projects such as electoral law reform or political party law reform as opportunities to pursue their interests rather than deepen democratization. In addition, civil society and other parts of the public life may object to parties meeting outside of the legislature to plan reforms, fearing that such interparty processes may be an effort to avoid the normal channels of open, accountable governance. Nevertheless, it seems useful to encourage party elites, through dialogue processes, to face the fact that the parties are in a troubled state and that systemic reforms are likely necessary to revive the image and place of parties in the society.

The interparty dialogue method is relatively new and would benefit from study to determine what such dialogues have achieved, when they can be most useful, when they are less useful, and how they might be developed further. It is important to avoid any tendency to sponsor dialogues for the mere sake of dialogue, but the method clearly has some promise.

C.   Party Financing

The means and methods of financing are central to the shape of political parties, and the overall political party system, of any country. In searching for root causes of the troubled state of parties, many citizens of developing and postcommunist countries, as well as aid organizations interested in trying to help support democratization, have settled on the financing of parties as a key area for reform. In a very high percentage of new or struggling democracies the financing of parties is perceived as a swamp of corruption and inequity that has manifold negative effects – distorting the relative strength of different parties in line with the concentration of economic power, reducing the representation of citizens' interests, embedding corruption in the whole governing system, damaging public faith in the pluralistic process, and so forth. As a result, efforts to reform party financing are multiplying, with a growing number of international actors offering support in this domain. Much of this international support comes not from the party institutes that typically provide party-to-party support but instead from other sources, such as multilateral organizations, bilateral aid agencies, and private foundations.

At the risk of oversimplification, efforts to reform the financing of political parties fall into three categories, of increasing order of interventionism:

– Greater disclosure: Some reforms focus on increasing the transparency of party financing by requiring parties and candidates either to declare the sources and amounts of contributions they receive and/or to declare the expenditures they make in campaigns. An additional form of disclosure requires media enterprises to disclose who paid for campaign ads that they accept.
– Imposing limits: Other reforms impose limits either on the amount of money that parties or candidates may accept from private contributors or on the campaign expenditures that they may make.
– Public financing: Some countries seek to introduce or to expand provisions to provide public funds for parties or candidates.

Along with reforms in these three main categories, some states have tried other measures, such as imposing legal restrictions on party switching (to discourage newly elected legislators from accepting money to switch parties), or making voting compulsory (to reduce vote buying).

Aid interventions to support the reform of party financing are also of several types:

– Programs to help government officials, NGO activists and others learn about, discuss, and develop possible laws and regulations to increase transparency, impose limits on spending or contributions, or create a public financing system.
– Support for government bodies and independent agencies (such as election commissions) to develop the capacity to monitor and enforce new party financing mechanisms.
– Support for civil society organizations, especially anti-corruption or other pro-transparency NGOs, to monitor party financing rules regarding disclosure or spending.
– Support for training of journalists to learn about new party financing laws and how to monitor them.

This is a rapidly growing area of assistance in which new forms of assistance are continually being explored and the lessons of the work to date are not yet very clear. Already however it is evident that one of the major cautionary lessons is not to assume that the problems or attempted solutions in any one society are necessarily transferable to another. For example although the use of large, secret private donations are the major distorting influence in some political party systems, they are not always the main financing problem. In other systems the misuse of administrative resources by the governing party in the single biggest factor in inequality in the campaign. Also, attempting to stop one problem may only open up the door to others, such as in Thailand where the decision to ban films and entertainers at political rallies ended up encouraging parties to engage in direct vote buying. More generally, efforts by international actors to support party financing reforms must be infused with the deepest possible sense of humility given that party financing continues to be a huge problem in many well-established democracies and there is little consensus among politicians in Europe and the North America on how to go about attacking this problem.

It is also clear that the impulse on the part of some international actors to view public financing of parties as a natural solution must be

tempered by awareness of the complexities of the issue. Public financing holds out the promise of weaning parties away from corrupt private sources, allowing smaller parties to exist, and leveling the overall playing field. Yet it brings with it risks as well. Depending on how it is designed, public funding for parties can close off the system to the entry of new parties, or in some cases lead to a multiplication of small, fragmented parties. Public funding of parties with weak ties to the citizenry may allow those parties to survive without any real social base and reduce their incentives for developing grassroots contacts. In a context of weak rule of law (which is the situation in many new or struggling democracies), establishing public financing mechanisms may only lead to new forms of corruption and disillusion the public further.

As with other areas of international aid to support the reform of party systems, efforts to support party financing reform are in a relatively new state. They would benefit from serious empirical work to study the record of experience of the initial wave of assistance programming to ensure that good intentions end up leading to good results.

D.   Aid Actors on Party Systems

Various aid organizations or technical assistance providers support or carry out the sorts of party system assistance described above. In some cases these are international organizations, such as the Organization of American States or UNDP. In other cases they are Western party aid groups, such as the Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy or the U.S. National Democratic Institute, that have a specific interest in one or other aspect of this work. In general there appears to be a need for more organizations interested in taking a systematic, long-term interest in what is a growing but still somewhat exploratory area of party aid.

Figure 1
Party Aid: Objectives
Party aid providers seek to help parties in developing and postcommunist countries to have:
– A democratic leadership structure with competent, rational, and transparent methods of internal management
– Processes of internal democracy for choosing candidates and party leaders
– A substantial presence around the country with local branches enjoying significant responsibility for party work in their area
– A well-defined grassroots base and regular contacts with the persons making up the base, both for constituency relations and broader political education
– Cooperative, productive relations with civil society organizations
– A substantive party platform and the capacity to engage in serious policy analysis
– A clear ideological self-definition that also avoids any ideological extremes
– Transparent, legal funding that draws from a wide base of funders
– A strong role for women in the party as candidates, party leaders and managers, and members
– A good youth program that brings youth into the party, trains them, and makes good use of their energy and talents

Party system re-structuring in Malawi in the 2004 election:

Can and should international party assistance play a role[3]

September 2, 2004
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> *"Everybody wants to be president, which is not possible".*
> NDA party member, The Nation April 3-4, 2004.

In this paper I will first describe the development of the system of political parties in Malawi. At the end of the paper I raise some issues about whether or not international assistance to political parties can and should be applied in the Malawian case.

The development of party systems in African democracies have in many cases resulted in weakly institutionalised parties (Randall and Svåsand 2002) weakly institutionalized party *systems* (Kuenzi and Lambright 2001) and/or in dominant party systems (Bogaards 2004, Gilliomi and Simkins 1999). In some countries the democratization process led to a rush of party formations (Decalo 1998), while in others, such as Zambia and Malawi, the first elections were dominated by a few parties (Burnell 2001, Rakner and Svåsand 2004). Malawi appears to deviate from this pattern. The first two multi party elections in Malawi (1994 and 1999) resulted in a three-party system, reflecting a regional distribution of support. AFORD dominated in the North, the old state carrying party, MCP, in the centre and UDF in the South. Malawi's third multi party elections indicate that the party system may be undergoing two processes. *Party fragmentation* in the period leading up to the 2004 elections, with a number of new party formations, some of which were quite successful, while following the elections the reverse process occurred; some parties *merged* while others who had previously shunned each other joined in a *coalition government*.

The aim of this article is to document these changes and to offer explanations for why they have taken place. We first present four forms of party system fragmentation of the Malawian party system. We then describe the post-election mergers and coalitions that have taken place.

Two explanations for why the party system first fragments and then

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3 This paper is a modified version of a previous paper by the author and Nixon S. Khembo and Lise Rakner: Fissions and fusions, foes and friends: Party development in the Malawian 2004 elections. The paper is part of a joint Malawian-Norwegian research project on "Institutions and processes of democratic accountability in Malawi".

re-consolidates are offered. First, the structure of the Malawian political system provides several incentives for party formation and few barriers exist against new parties. Second, politicians are primarily motivated by winning elections and gaining access to governmental resources which in turn affects their re-election probability. This contributes to party fragmentation in the pre-election phase and mergers and coalitions in the post-election phase.

Finally we discuss implications of these developments for the role of parties in providing accountability in the Malawian democracy.

Incentives for party formation, party merger and coalition agreements

General elections provide political parties as institutions and individual candidates with a 'window of opportunity' to gain political office. At such events there are more offices available than at other times, such as in the case of a cabinet reshuffling or in the case of a replacement of a government between elections. Access to political offices provide parties and candidates with a number of resources, both personally and resources that may be used to promote the interests of their supporters, the voters in their constituency. It has been argued that this is particularly important in societies in which there is a weak civil society, a weak private economy and a weak local government structure.[4] In such societies state institutions control the distribution of vital resources. Publicly elected offices therefore are attractive to ambitious politicians. It offers an opportunity for political career as well an opportunity to reward supporters.

The elections themselves are the first step in a chain of recruitment possibilities. Depending on the institutional structure of the political system and the actual electoral outcome post-election situations restrict, but does not exclude, other 'windows of opportunity'. In parliamentary systems or in mixed presidential-parliamentary systems, the government depends on support from the parliament. If there is no single party majority (or if no single minority party government is deemed possible), the post-election situation provides another 'window of opportunity' for parties and politicians to gain access to even more important offices than the parliamentary seat – a cabinet seat. Coalitions of parties, party mergers, the recruitment of individual MPs' to the cabinet and implicit or explicit parliamentary support for the government are ways in which parties and politicians can pursue a post-election strategy for political office or access to its resources.

The pre-election fragmentation of the party system and the post-election deals between competitors can be explained by the structure of opportunities in Malawi. The institutional environment is conducive to party formation and the hierarchy of political offices provides a special incentive to pursue control of the presidency or if that is not possible, at least access to the government.

The structure of the political system in Malawi is presidential, by design as well as by practice. The president is elected for five years in a nation wide election. The candidate with the most votes win, no majority is needed. The constitution allows for one re-election period. President Muluzi, elected twice as candidate for the United Democratic Front party (UDF), attempted to change the constitution to allow for re-election for a third term. The political turmoil surrounding this issue is a major explanation we believe for the fragmentation of the party system.

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4 See for instance Salih (2003: 355ff)

The president selects and dismisses members of his cabinet. Cabinet members can also double as MPs. The single-chamber parliament has currently 193 members, elected at the same time as the president, elected in single member constituencies by simple plurality vote. Parliament's prerogatives to pass laws, vote on the budget and constitute a check of the cabinet have in practice been curtailed. Parliament has few resources that MPs can draw on, the committee system is only partly functioning and the number of days the parliament meets is limited. The rules that regulate how many days are needed to pass various bills are often ignored. To Meinhardt and Patel (2003: 42) Malawi is an example of the general trend in new African democracies where the executive dominates over the legislature.

Elected local councils exist, but with few powers. There is no regional level government.

The political parties and the 2004-elections

Fragmentation of the party system can take place at several levels:

– *formal* fragmentation takes place when there is an increasing number of parties that are being registered,
– *competitive* fragmentation takes place when more parties are able to nominate candidates in a number of constituencies,
– *electoral* fragmentation occurs when votes are spread more evenly over a large number of parties, and
– *parliamentary* fragmentation occurs when parliamentary seats are evenly distributed over a large number of parties.

Formal fragmention

The first step in a potential fragmentation of the party system is an increase in the formation of new parties. The formal rules for registering new parties constitute a cost that potential party entrepreneurs need to consider (see f.i. Hug 2001). The formation of political parties in Malawi is regulated in the Political Parties (Registration and Regulation) Bill, 1993. This act has remained in force without any changes since it was enacted. The Bill stipulates that to be registered a party must:

– Provide a list of names and addresses of no less than 100 registered members that are
  – Citizens of Malawi
  – Have attained voting age of voters in parliamentary election
  – may apply in writing to the Registrar for registration
– The application for registration shall be signed by office bearers and be accompanied by
  – Two copies of the party constitution, rules, and manifesto;
  – List of names and addresses of office bearers of the party and no less than 100 registered members of the party.

The registrar may refuse to register a political party if:

– the application is not in conformity with this Act;
– the name of the party is i) identical to the name of a registered party, ii) nearly resembles the name of registered party, iii) is provocative or offends public decency
– the purpose of party is unlawful.

The rules regulating the formation of political parties are in a comparative perspective, extremely liberal, and do not represent a significant barrier towards new party initiatives. In addition, once a party is formed it remains registered even if it does not take part in elections by nominating candidates.

The old state carrying party, the Malawi Congress Party (MCP) was formed in 1963 and enjoyed a monopoly on the political scene until the transition from one-party state to multiparty system in 1994. In addition to the MCP, two new parties were successful in the first multiparty elections in that year:

– Alliance for Democracy (AFORD) which dominated in the Northern region, and
– United Democratic Front (UDF), which had its stronghold in the South.

Three additional parties also ran, but did not succeed in winning any seats:

– the Social Democratic Party (SDP),
– the Malawi Democratic Party (MDP),
– the Malawi Democratic Union (MDU).

Between the 1994 and 1999 elections, the number of registered parties increased to 18, but the five new parties that appeared on the ballot in 1999, the Congress for National Unity (CONU), Mass Movement for Young Democrats (MMYG), National Democratic Front (NDF), the United Party (UP), and the Sapitwa National Democratic Party (SNDP), were all unsuccessful.

In front of the 2004 elections the number of registered parties increased to 28, four times as many as at the start of the multiparty era. In reality the alternatives facing the voters were fewer, as some of the early formed parties had withered away, others were able to nominate only a few parliamentary candidates and even fewer made a bid for the presidency.

Hug (2001), in his extensive analysis of new parties in Western democracies, distinguishes between three types of new parties: genuinely new parties are those formed by politicians not affiliated by any of the existing parties, splinter parties are those the emerge out one or several of the existing parties, while the third type comprise those that results from mergers of parties. (Hug considers only the two first categories as new parties). Several of the parties established in the pre-2004 election period fall into Hug's second category. All of the established parties, MCP, UDF and AFORD experienced breakaways. Major part splits have often been caused by leadership styles, power struggles among the leaders, regionalism, tribalism, religious and political intolerance, personal rule and extensive political patronage, not because of conflicts over ideology or the general political direction of the parties as such.

MCP and its splinters

During the last part of 2003 conflicts within the MCP caused two senior members to defect and form their own parties. In December the former MCP publicity secretary, Hetherwick Ntaba, registered his own party: New Congress for Democracy (NCD), and a few days into 2004, the vice-president of MCP, Gwanda Chakuamba, left the party and announced his party, the Republican Party (RP). Ntaba was followed by two other MCP MPs, and nine MPs announced their switch to the RP.[3] These splits were rooted in the personal rivalries between Ntaba, Tembo and Chakuamba, fuelled by regional conflicts within the party.

UDF and its splinters

Several people defected, or were excluded, from the governing party, the UDF. Two new parties may be said to have originated from the UDF, although other activists were recruited to these parties from elsewhere as well:

– the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), started – according to its own web-site – as a pressure group within the UDF, but registered as a party in January 2003. Its leader, B.J. Mpinganjira, had been a cabinet member but opposed to the attempt by President Muluzi to alter the constitution to allow for a third term,

– People's Progressive Movement (PPM) was formerly registered in March 2003. Its president, Aleke Banda, had been a cabinet member in the UDF government as well as a founding member of the party, and

– in a surprise move on January 1, 2004 the Malawian vice-president, Justin Malewezi, resigned from the UDF and later joined, and became party vice-president in the PPM.

AFORD and its splinters

In 2003 the UDF government accepted the AFORD party as a coalition partner. This was controversial in the AFORD party and spurred some of its MPs opposed to the coalition to break out and form. The 'third term' issue also played its part in splitting the party. AFORD's convention had asked the party not to support UDF on the third term issue. But this resolution was ignored by the party leadership. This provided the seeds that germinated into the Movement for Genuine Multiparty Democracy (MGODE).[5]

At least three other AFORD MPs resigned from the party during the last year of the sitting parliament, with one member joining the NDA and another joining the RP (see below).[6]

Apart from the fragmentation of the three established parties, other parties were formed as alliances between people from outside the parliamentary arena in combination with veteran politicians.

People's Progressive Movement (PPM) is largely an urban based party founded by a group of professionals who felt that the Malawi political scene in the run up to the 2004 elections needed principles of accountability and transparency. The founding groups merged during the spring and summer of 2003 and held its first convention in January 2004. The initiative to form the party came from professionals and businessmen who were disgruntled with the existing parties. They were later joined by two former cabinet ministers, Aleke Banda, and Jan Sonke. Aleke Banda was elected at the party's convention as party president

Malawi Forum for Unity and Development (MAFUNDE) was registered as a party in October 2002. It was initiated by a group of businesspersons, but it also attracted people from other parties, including the former secretary general of AFORD. The party proved to be a fragile construction. At the party's national convention in January 2004 a fraction in the party tried to nominate Malawi's vice-president Justin Malewezi as the party's presidential candidate, although he had already signed up with the PPM. When the proposal was defeated, the fraction broke out of the party and hinted at joining one of the other parties, but did not intend to form their own party. Another party alternative, formed at the same time as MAFUNDE, was People's

5 Talks to reunite the two parties have started after the election.
6 Daily Times Feb 3, 2004

Transformation Party (PTP) was established in December 2002. Its main base is in the Northern region where it won a parliamentary seat.

Competitive fragmentation

Increase in the number of registered parties does not necessarily lead to increase in available political alternatives for the voters. For this to take place, the parties must have the capacity of nominate candidates in a number of constituencies. Rules regulating the nomination present another hurdle in the development of new parties.

The nomination of candidates for parliamentary office is regulated in the Parliamentary and Presidential Elections Act. To run for office a candidate must be a citizen above 21 years of age, registered as a voter in a constituency may be nominated and able to "speak the English language well enough and take an active part in the proceedings of Parliament"(Constitution, 1,i,b). Members of the defense and police forces cannot run for office.

In front of the election, the electoral commission defines a date for the filing of nomination of candidates. The nomination paper must be signed by 10 registered voters in the constituency. The electoral commission sets a sum for a deposit to be paid by all nominees and unless a candidate wins at least five percent of the votes, the deposit is not returned.

Table 1. No. of constituencies in which parties nominated candidates*

	1994	1999	2004
AFORD	159	75	40
UDF	177	191	164
MCP	177	187	174
CSU	6		
CONU		5	2
MDP	29	24	10
MDU	2	7	
MNDP	10		
UFDM	36		
MMYG		1	
NPF		4	
SDP		10	
SNDP		2	
MAFUNDE			21
PPM			112
MGODE			22
NDA			187
NSM			1
NUP			9
NCD			23
PFP			2
PETRA			18
RP			110
Independents	12	114	373
Total no. of Candidates	608	668	1268
Total no.of constituencies	177	193	193

* As table x., 2004: MEC: Parliamentary Nominations

How the *parties* nominate candidates is not regulated by national legislation but left for the individual parties to decide. (See Nixon Khembo's paper).

In the first multiparty elections in 1994 UDF, AFORD and MCP nominated a total of 513 parliamentary candidates, 84 percent of all candidates running. By 1999 several new party initiatives had been taken, but none of these were able to penetrate many constituencies. Ten parties nominated parliamentary candidates, but of the new parties, the largest, MDU, did not contest in more than 24 constituencies. Most of these parties had been launched outside of the three large parties. A further fragmentation of the party system occurred during the 1999-2004 electoral period, triggered by conflicts within the alliance of UDF and AFORD and within the MCP. Fifteen parties nominated candidates for the 2004 parliamentary elections and three of these, NDA, PPM and RP had candidates in more than 100 constituencies. In addition, the 2004 elections saw an increase in 'Independent candidates' from 114 in 1999 to 327. The record number of independent candidates is associated with internal conflicts in the parties, primarily with the UDF (see Nixon Khembo's paper). Many candidates who lost their bid for nomination in one of the parties declared themselves as independent candidates.

Thus, in the 2004 parliamentary election there were twice as many candidates running for office as in 1994 and the 'old' three parties' share of all candidacies had declined to 30 percent. This change represents a major expansion of political alternatives for the voters.

Electoral fragmentation

The electoral results for the three parliamentary elections are displayed in the table below.

Table 2. Percentage of votes for the major party alternatives

	MCP	UDF	AFORD	IND.	RP	PPM	NDA	Mgode	PETRA	CONU
1994	33.7	46.4	19.0	0						
1999	34.8	47.3	10.6	7.1						
2004	24.9	25.2	3.6	24.2	7.3	3.1	8.2	1.7	0.7	0.2

There was little change in the major parties' support from the first to the second multiparty election. Malawi appeared to have a stable three party system. The major change in 1999 was the increase in support for independent candidates. But the fragmentation of the party system in front of the 2004 elections had a marked impact on the distribution of the votes. Three of the new parties pulled a substantial share of the votes, as did the number of independent candidates. Independent candidates constitute the largest 'group' of new MPs. For AFORD the election was a catastrophe, and both MCP and UDF suffered from their pre-election splintering. While the number of effective electoral parties (Laakso-Taagepera index) in 1994 and 1999 were only 2.70 and 2.71, respectively, the fragmentation index increased to 5.0 in 2004, if we count 'independents' as a group.

Parliamentary fragmentation

Table 3. Percentage of seats

	MCP	UDF	AFORD	IND.	RP	PPM	NDA	Mgode	PETRA	CONU
1994	31.6	48.0	20.3	0						
1999	34.2	48.7	15.0	2.1						
2004	31.5	26.7	3.2	20.9	8.0	3.7	4.3	1.6	0.5	0.5

Thus, also the parliamentary fragmentation increased with the index jumping from 2.66 in 1999 to 4.6 in 2004.[7]

Attempts at damage control: party coalitions in front of elections

Naturally, the political actors in Malawi are well aware of the negative consequences of party fragmentation. They were well aware of the experience of the Zambian opposition parties in the 2001 election, in which the governing party was returned to the presidency with less than 30% of the votes, and of the successful (from the opposition's point of view) case of Kenya where the incumbent party lost to a joint opposition candidate in 2000. Therefore there were various initiatives in front of the elections, particularly among the opposition parties, to avoid a splintering of the votes for the presidency.

Civil society organizations, primarily the different Christian churches, initiated a process of dialogue and negotiations among opposition parties with the objective of arriving at a joint presidential candidate. This coalition became known as Mgwirizano (Unity). However, some parties chose not to take part (MCP), others defected during the talks and churches (NDA) while where denied access to the deliberations (NCD). The founder – and president – of the Republican Party, Gwanda Chakuamba, was nominated as the coalition's candidate, with the president of PPM, Aleke Banda as running mate. NDA nominated its own president as candidate, John Tembo ran on behalf of MCP, Ntaba was nominated for NCD and the Malawian Vice-president, Justin Malewezi, ran as independent – in spite of being vice-president in the PPM. (He was subsequently expelled from the party).

For the government parties, UDF and AFORD, the issue of presidential candidate, was left to the UDF alone, and even the vice-presidential candidate was picked unilaterally by UDF. The AFORD leadership seemed content to have the second vice-presidential position. Thus, the major issue for them was to avoid competition between themselves for parliamentary seats. In the end the UDF declined to nominate candidates in the Northern Region, accept for eight constituencies. This also contributed to the number of independent candidates as not all aspiring UDF candidates accepted this deal between the party leaders.

Thus, also for the presidency the voters had multiple candidates to choose among. However, shortly before the election, Ntaba (NCD) withdrew his candidature and was appointed to a cabinet position in the UDF/AFORD government.

Table 4. Presidential candidates

Presidential candidates	Percent of votes
Bingu wa Mutharika – United Democratic Front	35.9
John Tembo – Malawi Congress Party	27.1
Gwanda Chakuamba – Republican Party/Coalition	25.7
Brown Mpinganjira – National Democratic Alliance	8.7
Justin Chimera Malewezi – Independent	2.5

Thus, in a repetition of the Zambian scenario, the incumbent party's candidate won with slightly more than one third of the votes.

Post-election.

As we have seen, the presidential and parliamentary elections did not result in a clear mandate for any candidate or party. The UDF presidential

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7 Compared to an average of 2.04 for seven cases of plurality type elections in established democracies (Lijphart 1994: 97)

candidate, Bingu Mutharika, was declared winner by the electoral commission. However, his mandate was disputed from the start. A clear majority of the Malawian electorate, 65%, had voted for other candidates. Nevertheless, as a consequence of the rules he assumed the post as president. More problematic was the outcome in terms of their legitimacy. Almost immediately after the announcement of the electoral result, the Unity-coalition parties and MCP and NDA, petitioned the courts, claiming the elections had not been fair. The plaintiffs argued that UDF's victory was not real, but manufactured by the UDF and the Malawi Electoral Commission (Rakner et.al. 2004). The loosing candidates argued that UDF had rigged the elections and demanded that they should be annulled. In addition to the 'unclear' presidential poll, the parliamentary elections did not result in a majority party. The UDF/AFORD alliance won only 30% of the seats, compared its pre-election 63%.

Soon after the new parliament met, UDF succeeded in re-integrating most of the independently elected MPs. Many of these were, as previously mentioned, dissatisfied UDF members who challenged the leadership's deal with AFORD or did not accept that they lost their primary. UDF also succeeded in attracting the RP, NDA and Mgode into government. Although RP was the leading party in the opposition against UDF and was party to the court case, claiming the president had not been elected in a proper way, the party RP nevertheless joined UDF. The alliance against UDF appears therefore to have had only one purpose, defeating the UDF. When this did not succeed, there seems to have been no politically motivated reasons for not joining the government. NDA, which had originally split from the UDF, decided to merge with its previous parent party and dissolved itself as a separate organization.[8] This rapid turnaround could be explained in several ways.

If the political distance, in ideological terms, between parties is minimal, new coalitions may be expected. To some extent this seems to be the case. NDA's leader, as well as the PPM leadership expressed dissatisfaction with the way UDF had handled government responsibility during its watch, but that they basically thought the UDF's program was acceptable. On the other hand, several party representatives were not able to formulate clearly what kind of policies they would insist on as a condition for taking part in government.[9] Rapidly shifting positions may also be explained by the nature of the parties themselves. Rapid shifts from one standpoint to another, is possible because of the dominant position of the leadership. Several of the parties were created over night by individual entrepreneurs who for a variety of reasons chose to leave parties they belonged to. Establishing their own party ensured their nomination as presidential candidate and as such they became attractive negotiating partners. One strategy for the incumbent party would be offer positions in the government in return for the party to withdraw from the competition, as in the case of Ntaba's NCD. An alternative strategy is to neutralize the opposition after they had proven their strength in the election to offer seats in the government. This is of course typical of any form of coalition government, in which the coalition is formed as a consequence of the *election result*, rather than the election been fought as a battle between *coalition alternatives*. Where Malawi deviates from the

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8 Defending his decision to re-join the UDF the (previous) NDA leader, Mpingajira said: "Is there any need to strengthen the opposition? We do not need a strong opposition and I will encourage the government" (Cited in Nation Online, Aug. 23, 2004. (http://www.nationmalawi.com/print.asp?articleID=8806)

9 On the contrary, one AFORD representative was sorry that the alliance with the UDF had not been formed earlier. If it had, "..this fellow", pointing to his party colleague, "could have been an ambassador long time ago". (Interview with AFORD representatives, Lilongwe, May 14, 2004).

coalition formation pattern in established democracies is in the absence of ideological or political priorities as the *main factor* behind of coalition formation. What seems to be the main mechanism behind coalition formation is the dominance of the leadership in the parties. Because of the 'ownership nature' of the parties, a small group of people can negotiate on behalf of the whole party, and apparently also make decisions, on behalf of the party.[10] The best way to influence such processes is to be a leader, or belong to the leadership group, of a party. Hence, in a context like Malawi's 2004 elections with no incumbent running for re-election, ambitious politicians may perceive 'the window of opportunity' to be more attractive than in situations with an incumbent seeking re-election. This reasoning may of course also apply to others that decide to join parties. But if parties are primarily seen as vehicles for political advancement rather than as communities of ideologically like minded individuals, the threshold for leaving them may be as low as the threshold for joining them in the first place. Party splits may therefore be inevitable, stimulated or at least not hindered, by the institutional rules for forming parties, nominating candidates or winning elections. In this perspective mergers appear as an option if the attempt to succeed on your own fails. Since ideological motivations were not the prime motive leading to new parties, it is easy to abandon the new party if it proves unsuccessful. The parties that experience the splits do not seem to punish those that defected. On the contrary, they are welcomed back as they can bring back more voters.[11]

Although it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that rent-seeking may be an important motive when seeking office,[12] rent-seeking may also be stimulated by the actors' idea of representation. Representing the constituency may take priority over other types of representation, such as representing a particular party. This view is expressed strongly by elected MPs (Nandini and Tostensen 2004). Rent-seeking behavior may therefore not be exclusively for personal benefit but is rooted in the perception of what representation means. The structure of the Malawian electoral system promotes such perception, hence the resistance against adopting proportional representation.

Elections, party developments and implications
for democratic accountability

Does the turbulence in the party system, its fragmentation and the rapidly shifting position from opposition party to governing party matter to the overall quality of the Malawian democracy and to the ability of parties to advance and support democratic accountability? The appearance of new parties is a positive aspect of democracy. It demonstrates that it is possible to challenge an established party system and that freedom to form parties is a real option, not just a nice formulation in the constitution. The barrier

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10 It is quite common for party members to vent their frustration over the lack of internal consultation: "…Chihana makes decisions on his own" (an AFORD constituency chair (Nation Online Aug. 9, 2004 (http://www.nationmalawi.com/print.asp?articleID=8698), "Our leaders (NDA) said they had made wide consultations before joining UDF but the supporters only heard of this from newspapers and the radio"(an NDA national executive member) (http://www.nationmalawi.com/print.asp?articleID=8387), and "..decisions in the party (Mgode) are made without consulting the executive members and… only a small group of party gurus meet and act" (an executive group member of Mgode) (http://www.nationmalawi.com/print.asp?articleID=8590)

11 This is illustrated by the MP who defected from MCP to join the RP, but lost his primary and then re-joined MCP – all within one week. (The Nation, Feb. 17. 2004).

12 On disappointment among Mgode members in spite of the coalition with UDF: "The Mgode official said trouble is looming because most of the members are frustrated since they thought they would get positions from the government. "There was an agreement that some officials would be sent to diplomatic missions and we have waited in vain." (Nation Online, July 27, 2004. (http://www.nationmalawi.com/print.asp?articleID=8590). On benefits for MPs, se Nandini and Tostensen 2004, appendix 1.

against forming new parties is low. While the rules for registering as a candidate is simple, the nomination fees, Kwacha 10.000 for parliamentary candidates, 50.000 for presidential candidates, may exclude some people from running, but can not be said to constitute unreasonable hurdles. Although there is turbulence in the sense of party splitting and formation f new parties, there is also continuity. Malawian voters have on three occasions faced the same three parties. Thus, a central feature of idea of accountability, that the voters should have an opportunity to evaluate past performance before casting their vote, is there. Also, the voters have other alternatives to choose among. On the other hand, the turbulence masks considerable continuity. Many of the party leaders run under different party labels from one election to another and leaders rapidly change their position from opposition party to government party without clear *political* motivations. This is hardly conducive to improving trust and confidence in the parties as institutions among the voters and may breed apathy and cynicism. Thus, it is not party turbulence as such that negatively impacts on accountability but leadership maneuvering between parties and between opposition and government.

Can international party assistance play a role in Malawi's democratic development?

The story about Malawian political parties has shown that there is both party institutionalization and party system renewal. Until the 2004 elections Malawi had a three party system. The Malawian Congress Party is by all measures a well institutionalized party: it has survived the end of the one-party era, it has survived loosing the bid for the presidency in three elections, it has survived internal divisions, splitting the party from the top to the bottom.

The two parties formed prior to the end of the Banda regime have also survived, albeit with important different trajectories. UDF, although suffering internal divisions, has maintained its grip on the political institutions, particularly the presidency, while AFORD seems to have entered a period of decline and internal splintering.

The 2004 elections also indicate a strong turbulence in the party system. A number of new political parties were formed prior to the elections, partly by actors outside the political establishment, partly by political elites jockeying for positions. The splintering of parties and a record number of independent candidates in front of the elections was followed by a regrouping of competing parties and new alliances after the elections. Taken together, the pre- and the post-election periods indicate a highly unstable party *system;* that is anything but *institutionalized*.

What can account for this instability and can democracy assistance contribute to a more constructive party development?

There are two main sets of factors that seem to contribute to the turbulence:
a) the balance of political institutions
b) the character of political parties
c) the nature of representation

The balance of political institutions

The Malawian presidency is by far the most important political institution. The directly elected president appoints the cabinet and although proposals for laws and the budget have to be accepted by parliament, the latter's ability to overturn the president's proposal are limited. Naturally,

one does not know how this would function in the case of a Malawian version of 'cohabitation', where the president is from one party and the majority of MPs from another party. However, an indication of what could happen was provided in this year's election as the UDF presidency succeeded in re-uniting people who had previously left the party and also included former adversaries. But in any circumstance, the president is likely to prevail over parliament because the latter is such a weak institution. It sits for short sessions, it has an extensive turnover of members from one election to the next, its committee system is for the most part dormant, and has a limited amount of institutional resources.

This means that for many of the most ambitious political leaders the only office worth having is the presidency, or as a second best, a cabinet position. Political leaders therefore jockey to position themselves for these offices primarily and the party becomes a vehicle to obtain this. The parties themselves are therefore created and disbanded rather rapidly as they are not infused with any values in and of themselves, as Levitsky (1998) expresses it. Likewise, individuals aspiring to parliamentary offices, jump ship if their 'current' party does not provide them with opportunities.

There are institutional incentives for this behaviour. The president is elected in a nationwide election where the requirement to win is to have one more vote than any of the other candidates. Thus, the more candidates that evenly split the vote, the less the share of the votes is needed to become president. A similar process takes place at the constituency level. For the Malawian voter the party label therefore becomes more or less meaningless.

Political parties in many African parties suffer from what Ihonvbere (1998) has called 'leadership fixation'. Many Malawian parties seem to fall into this category. Although systematic studies have not been conducted, it seems that internal processes that are specified in party constitutions are not followed in practice. On the contrary, press reports are filled with complaints from grass-root supporters about the leadership's inclination to decide matters themselves. Information is used as a strategic resource. Withholding information about the primary election process in UDF caused confusion and anger and is partly responsible for the many independents running in the elections. The ambiguous nature of party statutes also means that conflicts within the parties cannot be solved adequately by using internal party procedures. Instead, internal conflicts are brought into the regular courts. For instance, as a result of conflicts during the nomination process 17 aspirants who lost their bid for nomination in their party, appealed to the courts to rule in their favour. Other courts cases deal with conflicts over the application of proper election procedures to party chairmanship, or conflicts over who has legitimate ownership of party assets when there is split in the party (Gloppen and Kanyongolo 2004).

The leadership fixation is also connected to the dependence on individuals for financing of the parties. Although independent information is lacking, there are several claims that parties rely almost exclusively on the individual party leader for its ability to operate. An exception to this is the incumbent party, which can use state resources for party purposes. Thus, parties as institutions are not likely to develop if their existence depend on individual's willingness and ability to provide finance and loosing elections, means that you loose everything. No office benefits for individuals and no resources for party organizations.

The nature of representation
One of the findings from political science research is that incumbent office holders have a much higher probability of being re-nominated as candidates and also of being re-elected as representatives. Magnus Öhman (2004) has shown in a dissertation about parties in Ghana, and in a comparative analysis of several African countries, that this finding does not seem to apply to the modern African democracy. He found that there is a remarkably high turnover of MPs and that many incumbents did not succeed either in being re-nominated or being re-elected. An explanation for this is the expectation gap between voters in the individual constituencies and the promises of the representatives. The MP is expected to solve many problems, not just for individuals but also for the community as a whole. At the same time seeking office is a strong motive among the political ambitious. Perks and benefits from holding office are extensive and few other opportunities exists. The temptation for candidates loosing the bid for nomination to defect to other parties or running as independent are therefore extensive, contributing further to weak party institutionalization.

Should parties be assisted through international programs?
There are of course several arguments in favour or opposed to such an involvement internationally, but let me just mention three reasons in favour:

a) no democratic political system of any large scale has been able to function without political parties. It is therefore difficult to see how democracy assistance can avoid political parties totally.

b) Previous and current democracy assistance has emphasised the role of civil society, in the form of NGO's and voluntary associations. These are of course also an integral part of democratic governance. However, civil society does not have to be responsible for decision-making. By supporting civil society organizations one increases the 'demand' side in politics. Support for political parties is necessary to increase the coordination side in politics.

c) Small countries, like the Scandinavian and the Be-Ne-Lux states, provide an alternative arrangement of political institutions and actors compared to the larger nations, like Britain and the United States. Awareness of these alternative models in politics is important in itself.

How can party assistance contribute to party system institutionalization?
Types of party assistance may be classified according to several criteria, one of which is how the process is organized.

I will distinguish between seven different models

a) party bilateralism: this model builds on the direct linkage of a party in one country providing assistance to a party in another country. The main advantage of this model is the clear identification of service provider and receiver. This type of linkage may be useful between political systems in which there are compatible types of parties, for instance along the same ideological cleavage, but between societies in which the cleavage patterns are very different, identifying the 'relevant' partners with whom to cooperate is more problematic.

b) party system bilateralism: in this model groups of parties in a donor country act together, via a unit and provide assistance to individual receipient parties.

c) party system to party system bilateralism: as above, but there is a similar inter-party unit in the receiving country.

d) Cross-national bilateralism: cooperation among similar parties in two or more donor countries to provide support for similar parties in the receiving country or countries.

e) Cross-national party system bilateralism: as in c) but the provider is a unit between two or more countries

f) Transnational bi-lateralism: international party federations, provide assistance to similar parties in individual countries, example Socialist International (SI) fund projects to benefit SI member parties.

g) Transnational multi-lateralism: as in f) but the receiving partner is a group of parties in an international unit, like SADEC.

What should be supported?

One of the contradictions in the debate about party assistance is the ambiguity about what it is that one wants to support; *individual parties* or the nature of the *party system*? While these two elements are linked, they are not identical. The overall objective of party assistance is to contribute to democratic consolidation, that is, to prevent a reversal back to a form of authoritarianism. Democratic consolidation does not seem to depend as much on the appearance of particular *types of parties* as on the qualities of *the party system*. Usually one distinguishes between four qualities of a party system: the number of parties, the relative size of parties, the ideological polarization of the parties and the parties' interaction with each other. What exactly these qualities should look like is more disputed and may be easier operationalized negatively than positively:

a) a too fragmented party system should be avoided, particularly if very many parties succeed in winning seats in the legislature: cures for this is a higher threshold in forming parties, ballot access or for winning seats,

b) a dominant party system, in which one party controls all important offices with no counterwailing societal institutions,

c) a too polarized party system in which the ideological distance between the largest contenders is very high and which therefore makes compromises more difficult and could also lead to more unpredictability if there is a change in power.

d) Collusion among established parties to exclude new comers from office may breed cynicism among the electorate and polarize opinion between those inside and those outside of power.

Models a) and b) above to a great extent assume some form of mutual party compatibility between the donor and receiving country and also ties the support arrangement directly to political actors in the donor country. Models c) – f) channel the support through a multi-party actor and removes the direct link between political parties in the donor and receiving country. These models may also have a stronger impact on the party system than on individual parties as it sends a message about modes of party interaction. Support for the system characteristics rather than for individual parties may also be more easily achieved by supporting the environments of parties, rather than the parties themselves. Strengthening parliaments as bodies, with providing infrastructure support as well crash-courses for newly elected parliamentarians of all party groups will strength the parliamentary parts of the parties – which in many cases represent the only part of a party that is in continuous activity.

Contributing to a basket fund for political parties in which there is prior agreement on criteria for which parties that could benefit, for what types of activity and under which circumstances, may be helpful in disconnecting a direct link between the donors and the reciepient and in addition provide a forum to improve inter-party relationships. Mutual distrust seems to be an important characteristic of current Malawian parties.

Democratic consolidation does not require, but may be helped, by parties alternating in government. The prospect that this is possible, or likely, may encourage party leaders to build more lasting institutions and encourage ambitious to politicians to remain loyal to a party rather than jumping ship at the first opportunity. Creating a more level playing field during election campaigns is therefore important. It has been documented several times how the official Malawian media, radio in particular, has given overwhelming coverage of the government party (See for instance EU observer report 2004). In addition, the Malawian Broadcasting Corporation has been suffering from inadequate funding in general. Support for radio programs covering the elections in a more evenly manner and support for disseminating party information in vernacular languages may in the long run provide a more balanced playing field.

Party assistance that is channeled through inter-party bodies or indirect party assistance, by supporting parliament and the media, may be better ways of strengthening the party *system*, and that is more important the ensuring the survival of particular kinds of parties.

Appendix: List of registered parties as of May 18, 2004

Party	Registered
1. AFORD: Alliance for Democracy	21.07.93
2. UDF: United Democratic Front	27.07.93
3. UMPD: United Front for Multiparty Democracy	27.07.93
4. MDP: Malawi Democratic Party	05.08.93
5. MNDP: Malawi National Democratic Party	11.08.93
6. MCP: Malawi Congress Party	19.08.93
7. MDU: Malawi Democratic Union	20.10.93
8. UCSRM: Union Congress for the Second Republic of Malawi	18.02.94
9. CDP: Christian Democratic Party, changed to:	
SDP: Social Democratic Party	15.02.95
10. NUP: National Unity Party	31.07.95
11. NPF: National Patriotic Front	24.05.95
12. MFP: Malawi Freedom Party	26.01.96
13. LP: Labour Party	29.05.97
14. SNDP: Sapitwa National Democratic Party	29.10.97
15. FP: The Forum Party	11.11.97
16. MMYG: Mass Movement for the Young Generation	19.08.98
17. NSP: National Solidarity Party	17.02.99
18. CNU: Congress for National Unity	17.03.99
19. MFUD: Malawi Forum for Unity and Development, changed to MAFUNDE	XXXXX
20. PFP: Pamodzi Freedom Party	21.10.02
21. PTP: Peoples Transformation Party	16.12.02
25. NDA: National Democratic Alliance	31.01.03

26. NDAP: New Dawn for Africa Party	13.02.03
27. PPM: Peoples Progressive Movement	20.03.03
28. MGODE: Movement for Genuine Democratic Change	06.10.03
29. MUP: Mtendere Ufulu Party	06.01.04
30. RP: The Republican Party	09.01.04
31. NCD: New Congress for Democracy	
32. PPF: Peoples Popular Front	06.10.03

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Repoliticisation of Democracy in Developing Countries:

Reflections on an Emerging Trend

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Introduction

The most influential prescription for democracy in the South and the former Eastern Block grew out of the peaceful transitions during the 1970s from authoritarianism to democracy in Southern Europe. Spain was the paradigmatic case, followed by several Latin American countries.[13] The theory was that international pressure might facilitate a compromise whereby popular forces were contained, while authoritarian capitalists, bureaucrats and officers were able to retain their assets – all on the assumption that they accepted the crafting of institutions in favour of human rights, 'good governance', free and fair elections and an independent civil society. Those institutions in turn were assumed to shape liberal democracy.

This model is now in crisis. Increasingly, many scholars agree that where important freedoms have been introduced, foreign interventions and global neo-liberalism have undermined vital preconditions for democracy such as basic public services and popular organisations. Civil societies do not live up to expectations. Semi-authoritarian regimes return or throw off their democratic facade. Corruption, abuse of power and underdevelopment continue. Democratic development seems to require that the old forces are defeated before they are accommodated. Ordinary people, and even democracy activists, find it hard to promote and use elections as well as many other rights and institutions that are supposed to generate democracy, in order thus to fight repression, poverty and plunder. In short, the main problem is the persistence of elite dominance.

During recent years, three supplementary or alternative perspectives have evolved. They all prescribe decentralisation, local participation and civic engagement against state dominance, elitist politics and which is often called formalistic and shallow electoral and representative democracy. The first trend is linked to various civil society oriented NGO's and social movements.[14] The second is the attempt of organisations like the

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13 Two of the most frequently cited scholarly works are O'Donnell, G. and Schmitter, P. C. (1986), and Linz, J. J. and Stepan, A. (1996). For a fine review of the discourse, see Grugel (2002).
14 C.f. for instance Laclau and Mouffe 1985 and Escobar et.al 1992

World Bank, the UNDP and similar development agencies to coopt and combine such ideas with those of their own.[15] While these two streams disagree on some policy matters and on the importance of the market, they constitute a joint mainstream in their wish to supplement and at times replace much of the organised politics (including ill-fated ideologies and deteriorated collective interest representation) with polycentric, local direct participation and civic action. The third trend, on the contrary, which is often labelled 'popular democratic', realises the need to aggregate such issues and interests. It attempts to institutionalise local, public spheres between government and people where citizens are able to deliberate and participate as equals, for instance the participatory budgeting in Porto Alegre, Brazil.[16]

In previous writings,[17] and in a new volume co-edited with John Harriss and Kristian Stokke, entitled "Politicising Democracy: Local Politics and Democratisation in Developing Countries" (2004, and Törnquist 2004a), I have criticised the three alternative perspectives for neglecting the importance of politics. The first two 'civic' perspectives have avoided organised politics in general. The third 'popular' formula tends to set aside the problem of how to create institutionalised spheres between people and government – in spite of the fact that its celebrated experiments in Porto Alegre and the Indian state of Kerala have required political intervention. The same applies to the implementation of deliberative democracy under conditions of considerable social and economic inequality. I shall return to this later, but in short, the major obstacle to meaningful democratisation seems to be due to the difficulty of giving people adequate political representation in societies where there are basic social and economic cleavages.

Interestingly, the general idea of the need to promote politicisation is now also gaining some ground within those sections of the mainstream that advocate local participatory practices as a supplement to the crafting of elitist pacts and legitimising elections. Programme officers assert that decentralisation can only be saved, and civil society can only play an important role in local democracy if civic organisations and movements engage in politics and do not just mind their own business (e.g. Antlöv 2003). There is widespread preoccupation with the need to promote better representation in order to counter peoples' frustrations with the poor outcome of elitist transformations, particularly when channelled through Muslim organisations like the Prosperous Justice Party in Indonesia or populist leaders such as Chavez in Venezuela. Old functional definitions of parties are revived from universal modernisation theories. Development aid agencies and various party institutes allocate more funds to support parties and party systems in 'new democracies'. The Dutch Institute for Multi Party Democracy, for instance, has initiated a new extensive programme in Indonesia, International IDEA has launched supportive research projects[18] and respected academics like Tom Carothers are writing books on the subject.[19]

The keyword seems to be the promotion of parties and party systems. On the one hand, after years of predominantly elitist negotiations and elections legitimising thus selected leaders and secondary civic participation at the expense of improved representation and political organisation, they must be applauded.

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15 See for instance World Bank 1997 and 2000, and UNDP 2002.

16 For the probably most advanced theoretical argument, see Avritzer, (2002).

17 For recent summaries, see Törnquist 1999, 2002, and 2003

18 http://www.idea.int/thematic_b.htm

19 C.f. the separate paper by Carothers in this volume.

On the other hand, there are good reasons to also ask some critical questions. Which issues and interests are now going to be politicised and represented? Which organisations are going to be strengthened? How is all this going to be done? For instance, how will devastating religious or ethnic and clientelistic politicisation of people be avoided? Some parties promote democracy, but what about all those that tend to be as dubious as the support for them? *In short, given that we agree about the need to politicise democracy, what are the dynamics involved and what should be prioritised?*

Democratic and non-democratic interventions

Before we can answer this question we need to address three preconditions.[20] Firstly, what really is the problem of political representation? If we do not know the roots of the problem, how can we fight it? According to universal functionalist theory, political parties are always needed in a democracy, but what if the parties in many contexts are part of the problem? Maybe one should not support such parties and party systems at first hand, but rather promote democratic capacity building among citizens who have been denied representation and equal access to existing parties – so that these citizens can reform them or build new ones? Secondly, which analytical tools will be applied when analysing the roots of the problem? The point of departure is always sensitive. How shall we conceptualise democracy and democratisation? Thirdly, is it really in accordance with democratic ethics to intervene in the politics of other people?

The latter point is the bottom line and this is where we have to start. Is support for politicisation, better political representation and parties in another polity almost by definition to intervene in the 'internal affairs' of other citizens? Is such intervention a threat against the sovereignty of the people, the demos?

My own answer is a conditional 'no'. Not if we limit ourselves to support for the infrastructure of meaningful human rights based democracies and the creation of their minimum requirements; not if we do that in equal partnership with local pro-democrats who are accountable to their constituents, while we are accountable to them as well as to our own principles.

What are the immediate implications? To begin with, public funds for international development cooperation, which (as in Sweden and Norway) are supposed to foster meaningful human rights based democracy, should only be given in support of the minimum requirements of such a democracy (such as civil and political rights or democracy within the parties) and not for partisan activity in favour of a special policy within such a democratic framework or for another more or less demanding democracy. (The more precise meaning of this will become clear as we turn to the definition of democracy.) This calls for cooperation between experts from within development aid agencies (such as NORAD and Sida), civic organisations, political parties and academia. One may still support parties, but only for their work in favour of meaningful human rights based democracy as such, not for partisan ideas of how to alter or make use of it. Of course, it is also important for parties in any country to get public funding to advocate partisan policies or simply to survive. Such support is essential in any multiparty democracy that does not want to be too constrained by private funding and associated vested interests. To the extent that one likes to contribute to such public funding for partisan party activities within another polity, however, one has to support

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20 'We' in this essay stands for those of us who try to understand and engage in those issues.

a fair system within that polity for subsidising such activities. Fraternal international party to party relations are also important, but they have to be conducted on the basis of public support for partisan party activity in the respective polities and according to their respective democratic rules. If such rules are not democratic and need to be bypassed (such as during the apartheid regime in South Africa or the Suharto regime in Indonesia) a substantial number of pro-democrats at both ends have to agree publicly, and in principle, about the need for unconventional and possibly even secret forms of support for democracy.

Meaningful (or substantial) human rights based democracy

This in turn presupposes that we have a clear idea of what is meant by a meaningful human rights based democracy and the minimum requirements for generating it. If we cannot identify the contours of the intrinsic factors involved, we cannot identify the parameters for continuous discussions regarding what is acceptable support for human rights and democracy and what is unacceptable partisan involvement.

Which are the basic elements of meaningful human rights based democracy? I am addressing this more extensively in trying to develop a framework and method for identifying the problems of and options for democratisation. (Törnquist 2004b, Demos 2004) Here we have to be very brief. What is meant by 'meaningful'? The most usual understanding is functional: the instruments of human rights based democracy may not be perfect, but citizens at large must at least find that the concrete instruments in their own context make sense in terms of their efforts to control and influence what they deem to be matters of common concern.

What are the aims and means of democracy? According to Beetham (1999), most academics agree that the aim of democracy is popular control of public affairs on the basis of political equality. This requires a set of general principles: participation, authorisation, representation, accountability, transparency, responsiveness and solidarity. Since there is broad agreement, moreover, that these instrumental principles must be based on every human being's right to justice and freedom,[21] the principles of human rights should also be included.

This calls for a set of semi-universal instruments on different levels in a given polity that are supposed to promote (1) equal citizenship, the rule of law, justice, civil and political rights, and socio-economic rights in terms of basic needs;[22] (2) democratic elections, representation, and responsive and accountable government and public administration; (3) free and democratically oriented media, art, academia, civil society and other forms of additional popular participation.[23]

To be meaningful, these instruments must not just exist; they must also function reasonably well. This is not to evaluate whether the instruments are producing policies to our liking or not – only the extent to which each instrument fulfils its purpose of contributing to the democratic infrastructure. For instance, to what extent are the institutions that are supposed to uphold equal citizenship really doing that? The reasons for poor performance may be lack of will or resources or capacities, or a combination.

In addition to this, extensive studies and experience indicate that two other factors are also necessary for a democracy to be meaningful.

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21 Regardless of ethnicity, race, religion and social background.

22 After all, it is intrinsic to a meaningful democracy that people can survive.

23 Beetham (2002) identifies some 85 semi-universal instruments. In the alternative democratisation assessment scheme that I am involved in trying out in the case of Indonesia, we work with a compressed and revised version of 40 only (Demos 2003, Törnquist 2004b).

Firstly, although well performing institutions may be very limited where a meaningful democracy calls for rights and institutions with a reasonable scope, we must also ask to what extent the existing instruments are geographically well spread and cover the issues that most people consider to be of public concern.[24] Secondly, since human rights and institutions do not emerge and act by themselves, we need to know the extent to which citizens at large (and not only the elite) are willing and capable of promoting and using them. We are thereby able to analyse the dynamics of democratisation and democracy, beyond rigid mapping of the state of affairs. Citizens' democratic capacity is primarily about efficient presence in various spheres and arenas of state and society,[25] efficient politicisation of issues and interests, efficient mobilisation of people, and efficient strategies to promote and use the instruments of democracy. This in turn implies that the players are well informed of power relations and other conditions – but not that conditions as such are ideal. In short, a meaningful democracy must be a *substantial democracy*.

Extreme rightists and leftists oppose this. They argue that while some human rights may be left out, certain preconditions and outcomes in terms of power relations are inseparable parts of democracy. The radical rightists say, for instance, that free markets and private ownership are essential. Hence, it is argued that the scope of democracy must be reduced, that those of another inclination are undemocratic and that they therefore have to be fought by all means, irrespective of human rights. The left-wing extremists, on the other hand, tend to argue that democracy will be limited to the bourgeoisie unless citizens are not only politically but also socially and economically equal. Thus it is argued that the scope of democracy must be expanded to include some kind of socialism, and that those who object to this are undemocratic and should not be protected against popular sovereignty by certain human rights.

Both these tendencies are rejected as they tend to undermine a meaningful, or substantial, democracy. 'Real' powers are crucial conditions for what can be done; and it is indeed also vital what we use democracy for. Personally, for instance, I may like to use it to foster social and economic equality. But to widen the concept of democracy to include conditions that are not absolutely necessary even for a substantial democracy, or how we wish to change or alter those conditions, would not just be academically unfruitful in terms of unclear delimitations of the dependent and independent variables. One would also compromise on human rights and prevent alliances with others who agree on the fundamental importance of meaningful human rights based democracy but do not subscribe to politics of socio-economic equality. This has been done all too often. The importance of the core instruments of substantial human rights based democracy must not be negated. That means to neglect the beauty of democracy in terms of its potential to limit the use of raw power and even enable the powerless to increase their political capacity, thus altering their conditions in life. The politics of democratisation is to enhance that potential.

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24 The combination of a rather wide scope and bad performance because of poor resources and institutional power thus equals what is often called 'choice-less' democracies.

25 In brief, one may distinguish between spheres (and arenas within them) that are related to the state, business, self-managed units (such as co-operatives) as well as the private and public domains within and in-between them. (The public sphere/domain may be defined as a framework of public and open institutions, forums and practices – as opposed to private and closed ones – for citizens to deliberate, negotiate, and co-operate. A public sphere is, thus, not necessarily managed by the state or government. Similarly, 'civil society' in terms of citizens' organisations may be more or less public or private.) These spheres (and arenas) may be located on the central and local levels as well as in the links between them; structured, then, according to the logic of territories or sectors. Within the spaces and spheres, there may be more or less open space for various players.

The role of representation and parties in substantial HR based democracy

With this we are ready to address the third precondition and the main query: what are the roots of the problem of representation with regard to the intrinsic factors of substantial human rights based democracy, and what should be done? Let me provide some brief indications on the basis of some comparative literature and on my own longitudinal case studies since the late 1980s in an 'old' democracy, the Indian state of Kerala, an early third wave democracy, the Philippines, and a recent post-authoritarian democracy, Indonesia.[26] I shall limit myself to four thematic conclusions.

1) Defective representation and political organisation are the main hurdles: In comparison with previous authoritarian systems, various rights and liberties are reasonably well established, even in Indonesia, and civil society is expanding. The situation is worse with regard to the legal system and the rule of law. While on the face of it reasonably free and fair elections are now common, representation, governance and public administration are defective. The picture applies generally, but it is less gloomy in Kerala than in the Philippines and especially Indonesia. While this includes corruption and the lack of 'good governance', malfunctioning political representation is even more serious. Parties and politicians are rarely deemed to reflect vital issues and basic conflicts in society. They frequently resort to identity and money politics, and members have little influence. The American electoral system in the Philippines has fostered political machines in support of personalities and bosses who abuse public resources. Similar tendencies are spreading to Indonesia in conjunction with the deterioration of the parties, decentralisation and new direct elections of leading public officials. Kerala used to be an exception, but since the late 1970s the situation has declined. Worse still: the chances of altering the problems in a democratic way are withering away with poor representation and parties, paving the way for technocratic and at worst authoritarian outcomes.

While the obvious solution is to give top priority to improved representation and political organisation, it is less obvious how this should be done. In all three cases, the party system and most of the parties seem to be parts of the problem. The same is true of the electoral systems and there are no easy ways out. Getting rid of devastating, dominant parties in Indonesia, for instance, by somehow introducing the personality oriented American-cum-Philippine system, is likely to take us from bad to worse and make it even more difficult to foster improved representation and better parties. My conclusion is that the solution must to a large extent be sought elsewhere or in clear cut attempts to reform the dominant political parties. If that is accepted, rules, regulations and support should facilitate a generation of renewed or new political formations that are more representative. This may be done in cooperation with experienced democratic politicians but it must rest on social movements and organisations that are related to basic issues (such as democratic rights, welfare policies or sustainable development) and social and economic cleavages (such as between different classes and related ideologies).

2) Politics on the retreat – the scope of democracy is reduced: On a superficial level democracy is spreading to the remotest corners of the world and

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26 Aside from contrasting the results in the three different contexts, similarities are first used to explain similar outcomes irrespective of the very different contexts. Thereafter different contextual factors are used to explain different outcomes among clusters of similar phenomena related to global processes of democracy under neo-liberalism. Finally, different factors are also used to explain changes over time in each of the contexts.

at times campaigners may even argue successfully for the inclusion of, for instance, gender or environmental degradation among the issues of public concern that should be subject to public control on the basis of political equality. Yet, the major tendency is that the scope and associated capacity of the instruments of democracy are either limited from the outset or reduced. Diminishing administrative and regulatory capacities allow for informalisation and corruption, especially at times of economic crisis. The undermining of the fiscal basis of the state and simultaneous globalisation of the control of vital resources, tend to produce 'choiceless' democracies within a long range of policy areas. Reduced welfare schemes and targeted rather than universal measures pave the way for political clientelism, brokerage and the extended influence of socio-religious and ethnic organisations with their own social security nets. It also fosters alternative criminal sources of income, including 'unconventional' provision of services such as 'security against crimes' and 'instant justice'. Political and administrative decentralisation without strong and democratic local institutions and organisations not only facilitates direct influence from democratic civic organisation but also from the much more frequent undemocratic 'civics' and even more powerful local practioners. Even the celebrated campaign in Kerala for a political and administrative decentralisation that would really be democratic and shaped by people's planning from below was up against serious problems with clientelistic party politicisation of civil society, as well as local government and elements of the very same campaign. The relatively successful depoliticisation of the military and police in the Philippines and Indonesia and the reduced role of state violence, have often been matched by semi-privatisation of their functions, for instance via political, religious and ethnic militias and security organisations.

These are strong general tendencies, but the expressions and outcome vary with the contexts. While privatisation has a long history in the Philippines, for instance, Indonesia inherited a large monopolised public sector from the Suharto period, and Kerala had built up the world famous model for human development through public actions that inspired academics such as Amartya Sen. Even in India, more generally, it is still the State rather than the highly praised NGO's which make some sense to poor people in need of basic social protection and delivery of essential services.[27] Beyond the general need to resist the worst expressions of neo-liberalism, therefore, ideas of how to proceed cannot be a uniform tool box to counterbalance that of the IMF. Yet, one basic conclusion is that private or civic solutions to the undermining of the state are not in themselves a viable proposition because of the obvious risk of generating alternative clientelism and favouritism around politicians, organisations and programmes. This calls for more unified and universal policies. Unfortunately, once again the party system and many of the parties are part of the problem.

3) Democracy bypassed or hijacked by the elite: The idea that international pressure and the promotion of pacts among the elite foster liberal democracy through the crafting of good institutions is increasingly often being invalidated. Dominant groups tend either to avoid the new institutions, taking vital decisions in the privatised spheres of society – or adjust to them, thus seemingly playing the democratic 'only game in town' but in reality taming the institutions rather than the other way around. There are obvious contextual variations. The Philippines may resemble more the Latin American way of bypassing through privatisation, while pri-

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27 Harris (2004)

vate capitalists in Indonesia still have to rely more on politicians, bureaucrats and officers, thus nurturing the logic of hijacking. In Kerala, finally, bypassing seems to be more related to the central level and to 'modern' economic sectors, while hijacking might be more common in decentralised institutions and the huge informal sectors of the economy.

The conclusions are clear. The predominant idea of promoting democracy by first facilitating 'good' elitist pacts, then getting the 'good' elite elected and finally crafting 'good' institutions has run aground and should be reconsidered. Surviving power relations cannot be accommodated but must be tamed by countervailing powers among people themselves, such as their ability to fill the streets against soldiers and tanks or block outright exploitation of labour and nature. Crafting of human rights and institutions can only be renewed if it is related to public pressure and demand. This calls for *additional and enhanced* social and political organisation – since many of the already existing parties and party systems are, once again, part of the problem and need to be reformed, or sometimes altered.

4) Poor capacity of popular pro-democratic alternatives: As previously mentioned, there are two major types of attempts to promote alternative representation and popular organisation. One stresses enhanced polycentric work with NGO's and social movements in civil society. Another comprises efforts at 'popular democracy' along the lines of the participatory planning in Porto Alegre, Brazil, and the original intentions of democratic decentralisation with people's planning in the Indian state of Kerala.

While such efforts have been belittled in the elitist transition literature, even the World Bank and similar agencies now admit that the civic and popular attempts have proved more promising in 'entrenching' democracy. Thus, they have coopted and reformulated some of the ideas, particularly those of the polycentric first trend. Yet, no viable and powerful alternative has emerged. The polycentric NGO-cum-social movement formula has rather contributed to the marginalisation of popular efforts from organised democratic politics. The most illustrative recent case was when the students who overthrew Suharto lost out entirely as soon as elections were put on the agenda, after which they and other pro-democrats were confined to civil society (A.P. Stanley, Priyono, Törnquist 2003). The Kerala experiments, which tried to link government and civic action, have run aground, and the participatory budgeting à la Porto Alegre rests with contextual political and other conditions and is no turnkey solution that can be exported and applied in just about any setting. According to my comparative studies, the most crucial dilemmas may be summarised in four points.

– Fragmented spheres: The presence of new democratic efforts tends to be poor where old progressive forces were strong – in relation to the workplaces and the state – and mainly confined to rather fragmented self-managed units (on the market, in the so-called third sector and civil society) as well as 'free-floating' communicative public spheres.

– Divisive and depoliticised issues and interests: Many of the new efforts are less based on collective interests, with associated political priorities and ideologies of how to govern public affairs, than on ideas of avoiding politicisation and campaigns around special issues, interests and identities. This is partly in order to prevent conflicts and open up for popular participation and 'social capital' against dirty politics. But that alternative is usually at the expense of broad social bases and movements while 'dirty politicians' are allowed to dominate representation.

– Informalised and short-term political inclusion of people: The new efforts tend to prefer temporary networking along the old anarchist or syndicalistic traditions and the new pattern of action groups and management oriented NGO's. This is in contrast to organised integration along, for instance, the tradition of left-wing socialists, social democrats and many Christian democrats. There are often unclear definitions of the demos. Territorial and sectoral organisation is frequently mixed or running parallel. Elements of populism, clientelism and alternative patronage (for instance through service delivery oriented NGO's) are often employed. This is partly to compensate for the lack of comprehensive and sustainable mobilisation and problems of either scaling up from local levels or reaching out to the local from the centre. But it is also a reaction against the deterioration of public social service and security and the increasingly common clientelistic service provision through patrons, brokers, strongmen, communal organisations and criminal gangs.

– Direct democracy and legal action at the expense of representative democracy and impartial public administration: The new generation of pro-democrats primarily promotes and makes use of the instruments of democracy that relate to civil, political and social rights, the legal system and civil society, including media and academia. They give less emphasis to instruments related to representative, responsive and accountable government, thus enabling instead the established politicians and the elite to dominate the latter. The new pro-democrats tend to be weak with regard to parties and elections; and the problem of combining direct and representative democracy is still unresolved.

What should be done? Would it be fruitful to promote links between established political parties and blocks, on the one hand, and NGO's and social movements, on the other? I am sceptical. It all depends on the character of the political organisations and the civic players; and it depends on the different contexts. Much of the party-civil society connections in Kerala proved disastrous – while the links in Brazil often seem to have been fruitful. I fully understand the civic activists in the Philippines and Indonesia who do not want to be swallowed up by 'dirty politics', but the question, then, is how they can improve their bargaining power. At any rate, the general point of departure should be the integration of citizens into politics, especially pro-democratic agents of change, on the basis of relatively autonomous broad popular movements – not the incorporation and cooption of people, for instance through populism and clientelism.[28] The question of how this can be facilitated calls for discussion and partnership on the basis of well anchored and non-partisan studies of the problems and options; studies which could then be followed up in the process of experimentation and implementation. For instance, as we are about to summarise the results from a nationwide democratisation assessment survey in Indonesia, on the basis of the experiences of the activists themselves, various players are beginning to discuss challenges such as the politicisation of local citizen forums and generation of political blocks and alliances – efforts which could be facilitated, with additional studies, in an international comparative perspective.

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28 For the distinctions, see Nicos Mouzelis' (1986) ground breaking study of politics in the 'semi-periphery' (the Balkans and Latin America); c.f. also Tarrow 1994 and Törnquist (2002).

Conclusion

An increasing number of academics and practitioners agree that the crisis of the elitist, as well as the civil society oriented models of democratisation, calls for better political links between civic participation and political representation together with improved politicisation of basic issues, interests and people. What are the dynamics involved and to what should priority be given? Let us summarise the major arguments of this essay:

– Support for politicisation of democracy may easily undermine the sovereignty of the people in a given polity. In Sweden and Norway, for instance, public funds for international development cooperation are meant to foster meaningful human rights based democracy. Given that one is in favour of this, support should only be given to the minimum requirements of such a democracy, not, for instance, for partisan activities in favour of a special policy within its framework or a more or less demanding type of democracy. This calls for cooperation between committed experts from development aid agencies (like Sida and NORAD), civic organisations, political parties, and academia. Support for partisan party activities and fraternal contacts would have to be financed through the regular public funding of parties in the donor country and by contributions to a fair system for public funding of democratic parties in the recipient country.

– It is necessary; therefore, to develop a conceptual framework for analysing the dynamics of meaningful human rights based democracy. This may serve as a yardstick for which institutions, players and processes should be supported. Such a democracy must be substantial enough to make sense to the people and not just the elite. The generally accepted institutions in favour of human rights and democracy must, thus, both perform well and have a reasonable scope – and the citizens at large must have both the will and the capacity to promote and make use of the instruments.

– What is the importance of representation and parties in relation to those intrinsic factors of substantial democracy – and what should be done? Firstly, it is quite clear that poor representation and political organisation is the most crucial problem of democratisation. The standard of representation and parties tend to be particularly low. Secondly, improved representation and parties is the only democratic way of also promoting other aspects of democracy, such as the rule of law. Thirdly, many of the existing parties and politicians tend to be part of the problem. In those cases, therefore, rules, regulations and support should rather facilitate the generation of renewed or, if necessary, new political formations that are more representative. There is no simple recipe for this. The answer at this point is that many of the dilemmas are contextual and that we need much more study.

– In addition to the poor performance of most of the increasingly widely spread human rights and institutions, their scope is also limited. This generates, for instance, elements of so-called 'choiceless' democracies, and more problems of corruption, clientelism and violence with the hollowing out of the state and the public sphere. While the most drastic and rather universal forms of neo-liberal onslaught against the scope of democracy must thus be resisted, alternative measures must be related to the ways in which uniform trends are contextually embedded. Again, then, many of the existing parties and party systems tend to be part of the problem, particularly with regard to clientelism.

– Everything points to the fact that the predominant idea of promoting democracy by first facilitating 'good' elitist pacts, then getting the 'good' elite elected, and finally crafting 'good' institutions has run aground and should be reconsidered. Authoritarian leaders have been ousted and regimes have been shaken up, but efficient crafting and implementation of relevant human rights and institutions calls for supervision and support through public action. And public action calls for additional and enhanced social and political organisation, not for the strengthening of those aspects of the parties and party systems that are part of the problem.

– The even more serious crisis is that the major attempts to promote alternative forms of representation and popular organisation from below (polycentric civic action and public institutionalised spheres for deliberation and participation) suffer from a political deficit. This political deficit is primarily associated with the fragmented presence of pro-democratic forces in different spheres within the political terrain, their preoccupation with divisive and depoliticised issues and interests, their informalised and short-term inclusion of people into politics, and their overemphasising of direct democracy and legal actions at the expense of combining this with representation and impartial public administration. There are no obvious shortcuts to progress. It is easy to say that links between civic and political activities should be promoted, but for instance contacts between on the one hand NGO's and social movements, and on the other parties and politicians, may generate quite different results depending on the contextual dynamics and character of the players. Politicisation involves many risks. This points to the need for closer study and promotion of fresh agendas on the basis of discussion of new insights rather than on existing positions and power relations.

In short, one should be careful in trying to tackle the problem of representation by support of parties and party systems that are associated with the *incorporation* of people into politics, usually through clientelism, elite driven populism and fragmented policies. Priority may be given instead to the *integration* into politics of reasonably autonomously organised citizens at grass roots level. This calls for, on the one hand, the fostering of their own democratic capacities to renew, supplement and (when necessary) alter the existing political formations, and, on the other hand, the crafting of institutions that are designed to facilitate this. There are no universally viable blueprints, only emerging frameworks for what should be considered, and a vast need for concrete analyses of concrete situations.

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Programme

Supporting Political Party Systems
October 13, 2004
Hammarskog, Uppsala

9.00	Welcome
	Helena Bjuremalm, Sida, Division for Democratic Governance, Stockholm
9.15	Political party aid: issues for reflection and discussion
	Thomas Carothers, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Washington D.C.
	Questions of clarification
	Discussions in groups
10.15	Coffee
10.45	Discussions in plenum
	Chair: Lars Rudebeck, Collegium for Development Studies, Uppsala University
11.15	Political marginalization and democratic capacity building
	Olle Törnquist, Dept of Political Science and Development Research, Oslo University
	Questions of clarification
	Discussions in groups
12.00	Discussions in plenum
12.45	Lunch
14.00	Party development and party system development: the case of Malawi
	Lars Svåsand, Institute for Comparative Politics, Bergen University
	Questions of clarification
	Discussions in groups
15.00	Coffee
15.30	Discussions in plenum
16.00	Short summing-up comments from speakers
	Final discussion
17.00	Closure of workshop

Participants
in workshop

Supporting Political Party Systems
Oct 13, 2004

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