

Democracy Promotion in a Transatlantic Perspective

Contributions by Maria Leissner, Annika Björkdahl
Roel von Meijenfeldt, Tom Melia
Pavol Demeš and Michael Allen

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PREFACE

This publication is the outcome of a seminar on democracy promotion in a transatlantic perspective organized jointly between the Swedish Institute for European Policy Studies and Sweden's Democracy Ambassador, Maria Leissner on 29 September 2008 in Stockholm. The aim of the publication is to make public the wealth of ideas and experiences that were presented at the seminar. It is SIEPS's hope that this publication will contribute to the debate on the role of democracy promotion in the transatlantic cooperation.

The seminar brought together high-level experts in the field of democracy promotion in Europe and the United States (US) as well as academics, policy-makers, representatives from non-governmental organizations and political parties based in Stockholm. The aim of the seminar was to take stock of the on-going debate on democracy promotion on both sides of the Atlantic in areas such as development and governance, democracy promotion versus foreign policy and the perceived backlash against democracy assistance around the world.

The transatlantic context which formed the backcloth of this seminar is propitious. In the autumn 2008, the US was gearing up to elect a new president which regardless who of the two candidates was eventually elected would open up for a new era in American politics. Expectations were building that a new president would renew relations with international partners, including the EU and its member states. The EU in its turn, was in the midst of a constitutional reform process in which hard fought-over treaty amendments were to be ratified by the member states. Ever since the rejection of the Lisbon Treaty by the Irish population in a referendum in June 2008, a high degree of uncertainty surrounds the fate of the Treaty. Nonetheless, the Union is set for a change at the head of the European Commission and a new European Parliament will be elected in the summer of 2009. In this highly-charged political and institutional context, Sweden will take over the rotating presidency of the EU in the second half of 2009 and one of the pronounced policy priorities is to promote democracy and human rights.

This present publication is a compilation of the interesting presentations that were given at the seminar. They provoked a rich debate which is reproduced at the end of the publication. The comments and opinions that were expressed are anonymous in order to respect the so-called Chatham House rule under which the seminar was taking place.

Dr Anna Michalski, senior researcher at SIEPS, bore the over-all responsibility for the project on democracy promotion in a transatlantic perspec-

tive and for the organization of the seminar. This present publication is a collaborative effort where Anna Södersten, researcher at Sieps, and Henrik Sikström, MSc student at Stockholm University, played vital roles and without whose efforts this publication would not have been realized. Dr John K. Glenn of the German Marshall Fund, Washington, provided invaluable support to the organization of the seminar.

Anna Stellingner
Director, SIEPS

The Swedish Institute for European Policy Studies, SIEPS, conducts and promotes research and analysis of European policy issues. The results are presented in reports and at seminars. SIEPS strives to act as a link between the academic world and policy-makers at various levels.

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SWEDEN'S POLICY ON DEMOCRACY IN THE LIGHT OF THE SWEDISH PRESIDENCY OF THE EU IN 2009

by Maria Leissner

On 18 September 2008, the Swedish Government presented a communication on the future of its democracy policy.¹ In a way, it marks a break with the traditional way of handling democracy promotion within development cooperation. The new policy starts out by saying that every individual has equal value which should be applied to all mankind, and the fight for every individual's freedom is what guides us. The aim of the Swedish policy of democracy support is to ensure the freedom of every human being and the chance to live a life in freedom. This new emphasis marks a completely different approach to democracy building within development cooperation. However, what we have done in the past has actually been shaped and formed, year after year, in a progressively better way.

Let me say a few words on how the Government views the relationship between development and democracy since this has been the central point of the debate for many years. For quite a few years now, I have personally noted that there is reluctance within the development community to go too deep into democracy support, as well as a reluctance to cooperate with the actors of democracy assistance because they have been regarded as being too political. Development has in many ways been seen as something separate from both the democratic process itself and the political process. Development has been regarded as something scientific that you can fix with the help of professionals, for instance economists. The notion has been that political actors are not really required in democratization. However, it is difficult to say exactly what the relationship is between economic development, on the one hand, and democracy, on the other.

First of all, it has to be admitted that there is no scientific research that gives clear evidence of the existence of a relationship between the establishment of democracy and economic development. On the other hand, a number of other interesting relationships have been noted. One is the UNDP's Human Development Index which is normally higher for democracies. Another, established by Professor Amartya Sen,² is that no

¹ See "Skrivelse 2008/09:11 Frihet från förtryck – skrivelse om Sveriges demokratibistånd".

² Amartya Sen is a professor at Harvard University and received in 1998 the Sveriges Riksbank Prize in Economic Sciences in memory of Alfred Nobel.

famines have occurred in countries with established democracies. This, I think, is really quite interesting. Why were there no famines in India after 1948? Not because the Indian Government was necessarily fairing much better than the Chinese Government, but for another reason: a democratically elected government corrects its mistakes more quickly and more efficiently than a non-elected government. This is because you are afraid of losing your powerbase; you are afraid of not getting re-elected. Furthermore, there is the ongoing public scrutiny from the free media. An elected government receives constant feedback, and this is why there is a higher degree of human development and why you do not find any famines in countries with elected governments. Yet, economic growth may not necessarily be the result of a democratic government stepping in the place of a non-elected government.

This is one way of looking at the relationship between development and democracy. Perhaps you could say that there is an established relationship between human development and democracy, but no established relationship between economic growth and democracy. A number of other factors, for example the distinguished World Value Survey,³ have established yet another interesting relationship. If there is a high enough degree of what the World Value Survey calls “self-expression values”, it is much easier to develop a functioning democracy. Self-expression values are the kind of attitudes that develop when a person has gained control over his or her basic needs, such as security and food. They develop when a person no longer needs to fight for survival every day. According to the World Value Survey, when a person is in that position he or she will start looking for other ways of gaining control over his or her life. That person will want to have democracy, and be able to shape his or her own life.

Nevertheless, you will find many democracies among countries where large parts of the population still have to fight for survival. I believe that Larry Diamond⁴ claims that at least half of the really poor countries in the world are democracies. Yet, it is interesting to look at the deeper attitudes of people. In the case of Russia, it seems that there are very low levels of self-expression values, which tells us that it will take quite a long time before Russia actually becomes a democracy. In many ways, there seems to be a link between modernity and economic welfare, leading to the kind of values that would lead to a stable democratic system, with stable democratic institutions.

³ See <http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/>

⁴ Larry Diamond is professor at Stanford University, see <http://www.stanford.edu/~ldiamond/bio.html>.

However, whatever way you look at the link; democracy is a part of development. The Swedish Government is applying what we call the extended definition of poverty, meaning that you are poor also when you are not able to control your destiny – when you do not have democracy. Accordingly, poverty is not only economic, it could also be political. Using that definition of poverty, democracy becomes an intrinsic part of what is defined as development.

There is a problem I believe with the Millennium Development Goals, as they primarily stress economic and social rights, and do not quantify civil and political rights. This is something that the Swedish Government is trying to counteract. The Government says that it is through civil and political rights that you actually have the possibility of expressing yourself, of gaining control over your situation, and improving your living conditions. Instead of an equilibrium between the two different sets of freedoms, the Swedish Government is now stressing civil and political rights as well as liberties.

Certain areas of the new policy are a synthesis of what I believe is a lesson learned from democracy promotion over the past few years. This includes the realization that democracy is always home-grown. Democracy is not possible without democrats, and for that reason, we are trying to focus more on the players who are already working for democracy and democratic consultation. There is no way that democracy can be produced from the outside; it is always produced from the inside. However, support can come from the outside, and support can be given to the players within the system, to the players beneath the system in order to try to put pressure on the system in question. Support can also come in the shape of pressure from the outside. For the donor countries there are actually three different ways of supporting the players; from underneath, from within, and from the outside – but in the end it is the players themselves who are the ones who have to do the job.

The Government also confirms that the rights-based approach of Swedish development cooperation should be stressed even more than it has been in the past. This could be done not only by using already defined democracy building programmes, but also by using other types of instruments in development cooperation. In this respect, it is particularly important to be aware of the role of democratic institutions. There has been a tendency to overlook parliaments and opposition parties and instead focus on civil society. Even though civil society is an incredibly important part of the democracy scene in a country, it cannot, and should not, substitute the formal democratic institutions, such as the parliaments. The Government

also clearly states that we shall take a closer look at how we can support and strengthen democratic institutions, including the media and parliaments.

There are also different ways of approaching the democracy situation in different countries; the hard cases, on the one hand, and the conflict or post-conflict countries, on the other. A third group are countries that are already striving, but still without reach of democracy. In the case of a country where you cannot expect a transition soon, you have to, according to the Swedish Government's policy, be able to terminate the official state-to-state cooperation, because we do not wish to strengthen the government of the country in question. Even in those cases, it might still be possible to work with other instruments to support the players, from within or underneath. A new option would be given to Swedish Embassies to use a small budget to support democratic processes outside state-to-state cooperation, even in countries where diehard dictatorships are in power.

The increased importance of democracy support within Swedish development cooperation is also followed up in our priorities for the Swedish Presidency of the EU. In roughly nine month's time, Sweden will take over the Presidency of the EU for a six-month period, and one of the four priorities in the development area will be democracy. The time is now ripe to strive for a European consensus on democracy, in other words a cross-institutional umbrella policy document on what shape the European approach to democracy support should take.

Sweden is not the only player in this case. There are a number of other countries, such as the Czech Republic, the Netherlands and the UK, which are already bringing up initiatives in different fora. For the part of Sweden, and with the help of International IDEA,⁵ we will provide a forum to bring this process forward. A part of the process is to have a regional dialogue through the regional organisations. Basically, how do they perceive the EU when it comes to democracy support? What do they think of what we have done so far and what do they want from us? I believe that this approach could be seen as a message in itself. The message is that a European approach is based on mutual respect, on cooperation, and on partnerships with democrats, and not least, on the regional organisations that have already adopted democratic charters, like the Organization of American States and the African Union. I do hope that this will lead to a formal document. It is important that we embark on a process in order to make democracy support an integrated and important part of the EU's foreign policy.

⁵ The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, see website <http://www.idea.int/>

SWEDEN AS A 'NORM-ENTREPRENEUR' IN THE EU

by Annika Björkdahl

In relation to Ambassador Maria Leissner's speech, I will, in the following reflections, focus on challenges and opportunities for Sweden and its democracy promotion during the upcoming Swedish Presidency of the EU in the closing six months of 2009. In my view, the Presidency provides enhanced opportunities for Sweden to act as a norm entrepreneur, to strengthen key norms and to shape the EU normative context as well as its policies and activities accordingly.

The Swedish Minister for International Development Cooperation, Gunilla Carlsson, is counting on Sweden taking a leading role in democracy promotion. In general, there are a number of conditions and circumstances conducive to such an endeavour. First, democracy as an international norm is a strong guide in various democratization efforts such as the 'colour revolutions' in Ukraine, Georgia and Serbia. The US is no longer the predominant actor in democracy promotion; instead a number of other state and non-state actors such as the EU, INGOs and development cooperation agencies are now heavily involved in advancing democratic principles and practices. The legitimacy and practice of external actors promoting democracy has grown, perhaps with the exception of the US and its war on international terrorism and the way it has undermined the legitimacy of its efforts to promote democracy. This has contributed to strengthening the recent trend referred to as the backlash against democracy promotion.

This push back orchestrated by autocratic regimes may impede efforts to bring new initiatives to support, diffuse and strengthen norms pertaining to democracy. The causes of this backlash are multilayered. However, the tarnished reputation of the US in this area due to the close association of democracy promotion and US-led military interventions in, for example, Iraq is a case in point. In addition, US reliance on and collaboration with non-democratic regimes in its war on terrorism, and its own failure to abide by democratic principles has undermined the United States' international reputation and credibility as a democratic role model and a respected exporter of democratic norms. In various places such as Russia, the Middle East and China we see autocratic regimes that question, challenge and attack norms pertaining to liberal democracy and the democratic model of governance. Alternatives such as authoritarian governance models based on nationalistic norms, religious values or models of political and economic stability and high economic growth are provided to challenge the 'western liberal democratic model'. These are challenges the community of demo-

cratic states need to meet at an ideological and normative level as well as at a practical level both at home and abroad to make sure that democratic norms stand strong.

To my mind, the EU is a pillar in the community of democratic states as well as a norm-generating arena, and by using the EU as a platform for Sweden's initiatives and by pooling resources with other Member States, the export of democratic principles and practices may be reinforced.

I would like to point at five challenges that I believe Sweden faces when striving to be an effective norm entrepreneur and to promote the values and norms of democracy.

A first challenge is to establish Sweden as a credible norm entrepreneur in the area of democracy support. There are a number of aspects that work in Sweden's favour. Sweden's traditional foreign policy identity as a small, neutral state and the absence of a historical legacy as a colonial power means that Swedish democracy promotion and assistance is seldom accused of being neo-colonial or a *mission civilisatrice*. In addition, the obvious lack of a will and capability to promote democracy by force means that Sweden instead relies on development cooperation, which incorporates, reflects and respects democracy. Yet, longstanding tensions between traditional development cooperation and democracy promotion are hard to overcome. Sweden also tends to promote democratic principles by setting an example for others to follow. She likes to portray herself as, a 'role model', and may also be perceived as one by others, with long democratic traditions, strong democratic institutions, emphasis on gender equality and high participation of women in politics. These Swedish practices are common to most democracies, and they are shared by the EU Member States as these practices are based on some of the core norms and values of the EU. However, to become a successful and credible norm entrepreneur, Sweden needs to convert these domestic experiences into policies and actions.

A second challenge is to take advantage of the 'Power of the chair', i.e. to make the most of the six months as the leader of the EU to spearhead efforts at democracy promotion. Ambassador Leissner pointed out in her speech, that democracy promotion is a prioritized area in the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. However, it is naturally not the only priority for the Swedish Presidency. Democracy promotion competes with other urgent issues that Sweden has identified as its priorities during the autumn of 2009, such as focusing on the climate, energy and the environment, promoting jobs, growth and competitiveness, contributing to a safer and

more transparent Europe, enhancing cooperation with the Baltic Sea region and the European Neighbourhood Policy as well as strengthening the EU as a global actor and continuing enlargement.

For Sweden to be able to take full advantage of the ‘Power of the chair’ and reinforce the position of the issue of democracy promotion on the EU agenda and in the EU’s external activities, the Swedish foreign policy elite must be purposeful and commit to the idea as well as invest energy on the issue. Although occupying this position of authority means the opportunity to control procedures and information, and a ‘problem formulation prerogative’, using the Presidency to pursue your own national self-interests is controversial as it contradicts strong informal norms where the Member State holding the Presidency is expected to ‘pay the price of the Presidency’ and ‘make concessions in order to broker a compromise agreement’. Yet, democracy promotion is not only a Swedish “pet project”; it is a common concern that deserves the attention of all EU Member States. Working in tandem with the EU institutions, Sweden may be able to develop concrete proposals for EU action in this field.

A third challenge refers to the crowded EU agenda. Sweden will inherit the agenda from the previous presidencies, and if democracy promotion is not already on the agenda when Sweden takes over, the six months of this rotating Presidency is too short a time to bring the issue to the forefront. Consequently, for Sweden to be a successful norm entrepreneur it needs to try to shape the EU agenda well in advance. Democracy promotion may be able to gain momentum if democracy promotion is linked to other issues already on the agenda and to the work the EU is already carrying out in this area, i.e. to the role of the EU as a global actor, to the European Neighbourhood Policy and of course to continued enlargement. So, the challenge of setting and shaping the agenda is significant, particularly since this is a highly competitive process.

A fourth challenge refers to coalition-building. Small powers with limited influence need allies. Although Sweden sometimes acts as if it were ‘the moral superpower of the world’, she is often perceived as a small power in international relations with limited global impact. Here, the EU provides Sweden with an opportunity to actually punch above its weight. By using persuasion and skilful negotiations, Sweden may convince other EU Member States and be able to build a coalition of likeminded actors that support the idea of reinforcing the position of democracy on the EU agenda and in the EU’s external relations. Sweden will during this Presidency be part of a trio with France and the Czech Republic. Getting these two as well as succeeding presidencies on board is the key to building a broad

European consensus on democracy promotion. By using the EU as a platform, Sweden may be able to bring more weight to its own democracy promotion and efforts to support sustainable democracy building.

A fifth and final challenge has to do with overcoming the common perception that the EU as an exporter of democratic principles lacks consensus, coherence and collaboration. Democratic norms and values are shared within the EU and there is a European consensus on democracy promotion. I think that the challenge lies in ensuring that these norms are reflected in a willingness to use the various tools in the impressive toolbox the EU has at its disposal for the purpose of diffusing democratic norms and supporting democratic practices in the neighbourhood as well as in other areas. Through the enlargement process, the EU has achieved great success in building sustainable democracy, but the results of similar efforts elsewhere in the world have been more mixed. The lack of coherence between various EU institutions and instruments is also more evident outside Europe. To overcome this inefficiency, the EU needs to be guided by its own norms in all its external relations.

In practice this means ensuring that democracy promotion is mainstreamed and integrated with the daily activities of the EU, for example, the ESDP⁶ mission, the CFSP⁷ policies, the trade policies, and perhaps most importantly various forms of development cooperation and assistance. Collaboration is a multilayered challenge. There is a need to improve collaboration and coordination among the EU Member States. Collaboration between the EU and its partner countries is an additional challenge and here it concerns relating to local ownership and leadership needs to be taken into consideration. The relationship between the EU and the US is at times tense and their worldviews may clash. For the EU to be able to collaborate with the US in a constructive way, the latter must repair its international reputation as an exporter of democratic principles, uphold democratic principles, and avoid associating democracy promotion with forceful regime change, not to mention the promotion of democracy by force.

Let me conclude, for the EU to be able to uphold its image as a normative power and stand as a symbol of democracy and export democratic values and norms, it must build a strong European consensus on democracy promotion at home and a legitimacy for such efforts abroad. The question for the upcoming Presidency is to what extent can Sweden move the EU in this direction?

⁶ European Security and Defence Policy (editor's note)

⁷ Common Foreign and Security Policy (editor's note)

HOW CAN THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY ASSIST DEMOCRATIZATION?

by Roel von Meijenfeldt

The international context for democracy support has become much more difficult over the past few years, and the interrelationship between democracy, development and stability (defense) is increasingly being understood and poses enormous challenges to the way international assistance is provided. I would like to briefly refer to certain trends that provide the context in which our reflection takes place and provide a context for our discussions.

The *first* is the fact that the euphoria over the spread of democracy as seen at the end of the last century is over. Transitions to democracy and the consolidation of democracy are complex processes which require long-term commitment and willingness to take risks and counter resistance to change.

The *second* trend is that with the changing international balance of power, the full implications of which – with reference to the unfolding crises in the international financial markets – have yet to become clearer, new forms of authoritarian and/or populist governance have emerged that actively resist processes of democratization. The autocrats have learned their lessons on how to block democratic reforms; hence we are being called to step up the quality of our support.

The *third* trend is the increasing awareness of the political dimension of development. The large number of failed and fragile states, of states bogged down in internal violent conflicts, has driven the point home that no sustainable development is possible unless the political system functions well and legitimately. People are not poor because they live in democracies, but they are poor because of a lack of democracy.

The *fourth* trend is the awareness that whereas the vast majority of people around the world aspire to be governed democratically – as is repeatedly shown in opinion polls and demonstrated through popular movements for democracy in autocratically governed countries – this trust is eroded when democracy does not deliver social justice. Democracy has to deliver, which is another argument for the natural link between democracy and development.

The *fifth trend*, and perhaps not quite a trend yet, is the increasing awareness that in the ‘roller coaster’ of new international relations and

global interdependencies, the future of our own democracies may become more deeply dependent on the adherence to democratic principles in the rest of the world and in the conduct of international relations, or to put it more bluntly, our democracies could come under pressure because of the lack of democracy elsewhere. Hence, support for democracy beyond our physical borders is directly linked to our self-interests.

In my view, what all these trends require is that a greater effort needs to be given to democracy support in our international assistance and that a review of how international aid is most effectively delivered to contribute to the mutual reinforcing objectives of democracy, development and stability needs to be produced (The 3D approach of *Democracy, Development and Defense* as opposed to the current 3D approach of *Diplomacy, Development and Defense*). In the remainder of this introduction I will focus on some key gaps or missing links that I have identified in EU international assistance and the methods and instruments that can be introduced to address these.

Firstly, there is a need for a more upfront, visible and strategic approach. Despite clear inter-linkages, there is no coherent policy combining needed political reforms (support for democratization processes) and economic reforms (support for achieving the Millennium Development Goals). In addition, the EU does not as yet have a common concept of, or policy on, democracy support, or even an overall EU Democracy Support Consensus. This is something to work towards in the EU in the years to come as well as within the transatlantic cooperation with North America. Significant differences exist within the EU regarding the value of democracy support and how to provide it.⁸ Working on greater cohesiveness and strategic approaches will enhance the overall impact of EU international assistance.

Furthermore, the political society needs recognition. Aid policies are mostly aimed at the state and civil society while neglecting political society. Yet, it is political society that determines whether there is stability or conflict within countries with the latter dominant in a sizeable number of EU third countries. Many countries proclaim to be new democracies but behind the official façade find themselves in a grey zone with many autocratic tendencies and practices still dominant and the deepening of democracy in recession.⁹ It makes many developing countries inherently instable or fragile.

⁸ See Richard Youngs, *Is European Democracy promotion on the wane?*, Centre for European Policy Studies, Brussels, May 2008.

⁹ See Larry Diamond, *The Spirit of Democracy: The Struggle to Build Free Societies Throughout the World*, Macmillan, Basingstoke, 2008, and recent publications of Tom Carothers.

Without a concerted effort to strengthen the democratic quality of political systems, the stability and sustainability of development efforts will continue to be adversely affected.

The EU has to respect the sovereignty of its partners and cannot work with all the stakeholders in political society. Yet, by supporting the state and channeling the bulk of the resources through the state, the party in power – which has often annexed the state itself – is supported. Due to the prevailing ‘winner-takes-all syndrome’ found in many young democracies, the lack of trust among the political elite and the questionable or limited legitimacy of many governments in the absence of ‘free and fair’ elections, assistance is sometimes perceived as ‘choosing sides’ by contestants in internal political disputes.

Moreover, EU assistance – like assistance from other international aid providers – tends to make receiving governments accountable to the EU, and potentially undermines the necessary accountability between governments and their citizens, thereby becoming a hindrance to democratization. Budget support without rebalancing the powers between the executive, legislative and judiciary and between national and local authorities, will result in a de facto strengthening of the ruling elite without reinforcing the accountability instruments and mechanisms between the state and its citizens.

Although politics matter, political challenges are often approached in a technocratic fashion under the heading of ‘governance’. This results in an investment in hardware but has failed to address core political matters which often arise out of the software (lack of trust, winner-takes-all syndrome, unfinished processes of nation-building, etc). The technocratic approach and the heavy external consultancy input tend to disempower political elites who buy-in because of the financial incentives that come with accepting advice but who have neither internalized nor indigenized the external advice.

Finally, there is a need to balance state, civil society, private sector and political society support. Stable democracies require a well-functioning state, a pluriform and vibrant civil society, a dynamic private sector and a legitimate and representative political society. In young democracies, the relations between the various components are often acrimonious and roles are confused. The manner in which international assistance is provided may, unintentionally, contribute to the inherent instability and animosity within young, fragile democracies. It is important that assistance is inclusive and contributes to constructive relations between the essential

components that make up a state. I will now focus on what *methods* and/or *instruments* can be used to address these perceived ‘gaps’ and ‘missing links’.

The EU’s achievement of widening democracy through the application of the Copenhagen Criteria in the accession process has been labeled the biggest success story in history. Accession is not an option, however, for most if not all of the third countries in EU’s neighborhood. New approaches need to be explored and implemented while adhering to the golden rule of European democracy assistance: *while democracy cannot be exported, nor imported, it can be supported and Europe has a lot to offer in this regard.*

One way of addressing the perceived ‘gaps’ would be the facilitation of national political reform agendas: The IMF and the World Bank’s Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers need to be complemented by Democratic Consolidation Strategy Papers (DCSP) as produced in Ghana, for example. This is not a process to be owned by the major international development institutions but by the key political stakeholders themselves in consultation with civil society in the countries in question. Democracy can only become sustainable when it is developed from within. That process can be facilitated through specialized democracy support institutions in the EU that hold a spectrum-wide trust of the political and civil society within EU third countries. The inclusive facilitation should contribute to higher levels of trust amongst the political and civil society elites and to a consensus on a national agenda for political reform aimed at entrenching democracy and political stability.

Furthermore, ownership and analysis are key ingredients: Appropriate and context specific democracy assistance is based on a thorough and locally owned analysis resulting in reform proposals by the national stakeholders across political divides. Specific actions should only follow from such a comprehensive process. Ad hoc interventions, such as support for parliaments (there are parliaments today with more agencies supporting them than there are members of parliament) or for electoral commissions, for example, without the overall picture of how the political dispensation works or how power is distributed, are likely to miss their targets. Much well-intended assistance is provided without a broadly supported overall national analysis of the needs to democratize the political system.

In addition to enhancing local ownership, nationally agreed agendas offer the opportunity for the EU and other international partners to harmonize their assistance for political reform processes in the spirit of the Paris

Declaration.¹⁰ At the same time, these national agendas provide the yardsticks for the progress that is made in implementing the agreed actions offering the opportunity to monitor the progress and to attach incentives for good performers.

Through the facilitation of inclusive processes, the necessary trust is developed which feeds the commitment to pursue needed reforms. Democracy is not built overnight and, hence, needs a longer-term perspective in the delivery of support. At the same time, the instruments used to deliver support need to operate with the required flexibility to respond to changing opportunities and challenges in a trajectory that is by definition non-linear. A longer-term investment policy would enable democratization trajectories to root and become sustainable. Critics have argued that the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights has failed to have any real impact, given its support to ad hoc and project-based initiatives.¹¹ By default, eighteen-month to three-year projects without a follow-up simply cannot generate the desired impact of lasting democratic reform.

A further instrument is a review of constitutions and electoral systems. Spectrum-wide cooperation within political society often leads to a return to the design table with the constitution as the apex at which relations between the state and its citizens are arranged and where power is distributed within the state. Good examples today are offered by Zambia, Kenya, Ghana, Guatemala, Indonesia and to a lesser extent Malawi, Tanzania, Bolivia and Ecuador. For a longer-term stability in young democracies, successful constitutional review processes and a review of the electoral system are essential to nation-building and in order to strengthen the democratic legitimacy of the state. These processes are facilitated by specialized institutions in the EU without a formal link with the official EU aid assistance to ensure the integrity of the processes and prevent double-agenda interventions.

Furthermore, there should be a mix of positive and negative measures towards hardcore dictatorships: The above also applies to countries in the 'grey zone'. Countries governed by hard-core anti-democratic elites such as Zimbabwe, Burma or Belarus, for example, require a similar approach, one that is by definition and out of necessity less inclusive while aiming at facilitating consensus among the democratic opposition and civil society in preparation of a peaceful transition to a democratic dispensation. This

¹⁰See <http://www1.worldbank.org/harmonization/Paris/FINALPARISDECLARATION.pdf>

¹¹*No peace and prosperity without democracy and human rights*, Youngs, Bossuyt and Von Meijenfeldt, report written for the European Parliament under the auspices of NIMD, 2005.

approach should be applied in tandem with appropriate negative measures in the EU foreign policy instruments. This balanced approach was successfully applied by the EU in the final days of apartheid and during the peaceful transition towards democracy in South Africa.

There is scope to make the delivery of aid focused on meeting the Millennium Development Goals more conducive to democracy building. 'Democracy audits' of aid flows may help to identify opportunities to improve the instrumentality of aid in advancing democracy and the practice of democratic culture in the recipient countries.

In conclusion, adherence to the ownership principle and recognition that democracy has to grow from within and not from without require a thorough review of how international support for democratization processes is delivered.

Another finding is that development assistance is not the same as democracy support, yet the way development assistance is delivered may contribute to the strengthening either autocratic tendencies or democratization processes. Again, a thorough review of whether or not international development assistance contributes or undermines the accountability of governments towards their citizens has significant potential of improving delivery methods that strengthen democratization processes.

An EU Consensus on Democracy Support would be a major step in creating a common lexicon on what democracy support is all about, what instruments are available and how the assistance is delivered. To prepare such a future consensus, an EU expert task force, combining governmental and non-governmental expertise in democracy support and including expertise on development cooperation, human rights and governance support to assure coherency, should be established to prepare input in the future decision-making on the proposed Consensus on Democracy Support.

Finally, the proposed EU expert task force could work in tandem with North American counterparts or, alternatively, a joint transatlantic task force with joint governmental and non-governmental participation could be established as an outcome of the next EU-US summit.

DEMOCRACY PROMOTION AT A CROSSROADS

by Thomas O. Melia

We are approaching several crossroads: European elections to the EU Parliament next June, a new European Commission; and the US will have important elections by the end of 2008. We should recall that the election in the United States in 2006 led to a change of the control of our Congress and had important implications, not only for foreign policy, but also for the character of our democratic performance at home. The 2008 presidential election is very important, specifically for the area of democracy promotion policy.

I believe that the implications are clear depending on whether Obama or McCain wins. Both are forward-leaning on the importance of these issues in American foreign policy. They have chosen advisors that are very knowledgeable and experienced in this area, and I think that either will have a continuation of some form of democracy promotion as we have understood it in recent years. In one important way, McCain employs slightly more muscular rhetoric, as when he talks about a 'League of Democracies' to act in times of what I think he envisions as military necessity. Apparently it will be some version of the Bush Administration's 'Coalition of the Willing', rather than a democracy promotion enterprise *per se*. Aside from that, I think McCain and Obama have very similar views on democracy promotion instincts.

However, we do have three large obstacles that may lead the new administration to hesitate and provide some kind of constraint on our ability to act. One issue is the burden of the Iraq intervention which has, interestingly and perversely, been portrayed after the fact by both the invasion supporters and by its critics as a democracy promotion initiative, which was not the reasoning at the time of the invasion in March of 2003. Regardless, it does not seem to matter what the rationale for the invasion actually was, it is now seen by both supporters and critics to have been a 'democracy promotion' initiative, so that is a burden that America carries forward. Clearly, military invasion to overthrow dictatorships and hopefully install democratic governments is not what professionals in this field envision as an option when we speak of 'democracy promotion.'

The second constraint is the diminished lustre of America's own democratic example, the resort to torture and violation of the Geneva conventions, and the intrusion into the civil liberties of American citizens, in the name of the war of terror. This has lately made us a less confident and less obvious

example of democracy in the world. One important aspect of American power and influence in the world, in addition to our economic and military prowess, has always been the example we present – the example of a people always striving, even if imperfectly, to improve our own democratic standards and performance. This aspect of what the US has been projecting to the world has changed in recent years and hopefully will be improved in the next administration.

I want to emphasize specifically the third constraint on American investment in democracy promotion that will hinder the next US administration, one that has become increasingly apparent in recent weeks in the form of the financial system in distress, which obviously might drag down the US and the global economy. In the next few years, it will certainly make the US less generous in aid to the third world and less adventurous in our international relations. Nobody has really talked about this yet in Washington. Our current annual budget process is essentially suspended until after the presidential elections, so we do not really know what foreign aid spending will look like going forward, except that the US Government recently promised a billion dollars to Georgia – money that we do not have, except if it is pulled from other international commitments. So, even if it is an Obama administration in Washington next year, one of the major implications of the current financial crisis is that we will be less generous and this will have implications in democracy promotion among other areas.

I would like to refer briefly to the distinction between *Realpolitik* and normative goals in international relations – the idealistic vs. realpolitik approaches in international relations – which was raised by a previous speaker. I am not persuaded that this is a distinction that matters a lot in American foreign policy; certainly not as much as it matters to academics who analyze foreign policy. In the next few years, the only way that any American president will be able to advance a democracy promotion agenda will be if he presents it as a national security imperative. We will not have the luxury of asserting or defending the value of democratic norms if it does not appear to be directly related to military or economic security for Americans. We do not *do* idealism; we do not *do* norm-setting. We can only justify it in our domestic political process on grounds of military and economic security. And that will be even truer in the next few years than it has been in the past few years.

We have another crossroad on the map, but this may be an intersection that we have just passed through, rather than one that is ahead of us. I would say that the post-Cold War era ended with a bang with this summer's

invasion of Georgia by Russian troops. The Russians had clearly been preparing for this action for some time and this underscores that it was not an isolated event; it was as much related to Kosovo as it was to the Rose revolution. The Russian intervention of Georgia, I would argue, is the culmination of a process that began a decade ago when Vladimir Putin first became prime minister when Russia began to regain its footing, was emboldened, and then embarked on a state-building project of some considerable ambition, daring and even ruthlessness. This nation-building project was neither in the spirit of 'benefiting from peace dividends' from the post cold war era nor a strengthening of the global regime of international law that many of us envisioned after the fall of the Berlin Wall. This state-building project by Russia, which has now culminated with the intervention in Georgia, I think, has clearly marked the end of the post-Cold War era once and for all. We now live in a new world in which the democratic ideal is being challenged quite actively.

We are in a different world than we were before August, and I think we need to incorporate that into our thinking about democracy promotion almost everywhere in the world. When we talk about 'countries at a crossroads', it is a distinctly darker phrase than it was some years ago when we thought of countries at a crossroad as almost always a hopeful notion. There are different ways we go forward, but more often than not, countries at the crossroads today are taking the wrong turn and are going in the wrong direction. And that is the new meaning of 'countries at the crossroads'.

Does anyone now believe that Nazarbayev's Kazakhstan will even pretend to live up to the commitments it made at Madrid last year about how chairing the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) will lead it to further consolidating its democratic practices? Does anyone now believe that the staging of the Olympics in Beijing this past summer helped catalyze Chinese government respect for international norms or freedom of association and freedom of expression? Does anyone think that Russia's admission to the G-8 has lured it into a web of democratic norms and respect for international law?

Many have asked whether in the Russian-Georgian war there was there something we in the West did wrong that led to this development and, in that case, whether could it have been avoided? Or was it something that arose naturally from Russia getting back on its feet after a decade of disarray and reassessing its interests in the world? If the Coloured Revolutions of Ukraine and Georgia were, indeed, 'Moscow's 9/11', in that it was a call to arms, was not it something we did right, rather than something we did

wrong? The broader debate about international intervention or regime change misses what was distinctive about the Colour Revolutions: these were home-grown efforts to strengthen or transform formal but hollow political processes, such as elections, into substantive political events like genuine elections. The US and Europe did not set out to overthrow existing regimes; these were semi-authoritarian regimes holding elections which they did not anticipate to be problematic. In each case what was distinctive was that the key role played by local actors in turning these seasons of popular unhappiness with unaccountable government into an opportunity to install a new, more democratic, set of actors in government.

As we go forward in our discussions today, and in our work, we should stay focused on the fact that our role as democracy promoters is really to take our cues from local actors in countries where there is a potential for movement toward more genuine democratic systems. If local actors are not pressing for positive change, and asking for our help, then there is often little we can do. When they are standing up and taking risks, and would welcome our help, we have an obligation to respond. We are again at a crossroads, as western democracies decide whether and in what ways to respond to those requests for solidarity and assistance.

UKRAINE AND BELARUS – A TEST CASE OF A POLICY TRADE-OFF BETWEEN NORMATIVE AND REALISTIC POLICIES

by Pavol Demeš

Ukraine and Belarus are two countries that serve as interesting and useful case studies for our deliberations and assessment of democracy assistance. The point of departure of this presentation is to look at similarities and differences between the two. Although both states share similar features, the differences between them are numerous.

Ukraine and Belarus are predominantly eastern Slavic, orthodox Christian countries. They are now re-discovering their own heritage, culture and even language which have been suppressed for a long time and particularly during the decades of Soviet totalitarian rule. The peoples of Ukraine and Belarus were subjects of the horrors of both Stalinism and fascism during the last century and lost significant parts of their populations.

Both Ukraine and Belarus are post-Soviet countries which came into being after the Soviet Union was dissolved in 1991. They have been building their own state institutions, establishing their own political and social culture and independent foreign policy for a rather short time, in fact for just less than two decades.

They belong to the so-called Eastern Partnership countries, together with Moldova, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan. These states are situated in the sensitive area between two distinctly different regions, the EU and Russia. Their position has serious implications on their balancing between the two geopolitical entities. The territories of Ukraine and Belarus are the key energy corridors for Russian oil and gas flowing to EU countries.

However, there are a number of differences between these two countries. First of all the size and diversity of the population:

While Belarus is a medium-sized country with a rather homogenous population of ten million, Ukraine is a regional power with almost 50 million inhabitants and a more diverse ethnic composition. Territory and demography are definitely factors that shape the mindset of a nation. Moreover, populous nations also carry more weight in geopolitical terms.

Second, the political evolution after the emergence of these two countries on the map of Europe:

Ukraine's post-communist transition was definitely not an easy one, but the country made its strategic choice after the Orange Revolution of 2004

which not only put Ukraine on the path to democracy but also re-oriented the country's foreign policy towards a future membership of the European and Euro-Atlantic structures. Ukraine today enjoys freedom of association and assembly, and the media are mostly independent from political pressures. There is a multiparty system in place in the country and two free parliamentary elections have been held already. Public and private Western organisations have developed multiple programmes in Ukraine, the aim being to assist with political, economic and social reforms.

Whereas there has already been a democratic breakthrough in Ukraine, change has yet to arrive in Belarus which remains a rather unique case in Europe. Although there is a semblance of 'order' in Belarus, it is the only country of the Old Continent that was excluded from the Council of Europe, due to the autocratic regime of President Alexander Lukashenko who came into power in 1994, and found itself in significant international isolation. The electronic media in Belarus are fully controlled by the state, freedom of association is severely limited, and NGOs that criticise the political direction of the country are either under surveillance or have seized to exist as legal entities. Political parties opposing the current regime are under enormous pressures and can barely survive, let alone function. Due to the controlled electoral system there is not a single member of the opposition in Parliament. Foreign organisations which could be involved in the political modernisation of the country are not allowed to register in Belarus. Clearly, the situation is very different from that of Ukraine.

After the fall of communism and the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the EU, the United States and other developed countries designed similar programmes of political and economic assistance to the newly independent post-Soviet states. Both Ukraine and Belarus initially welcomed Western assistance believing that it would help them to overcome the legacy of their authoritarian past and to build modern democratic states based on political and civic liberties, and eventually to join the European family of democratic states.

Although Ukraine and Belarus departed from the same communist ideology their transition into political pluralism and a free market have been much more difficult than in the neighbouring Baltic States or in the Visegrad countries. In both cases new political elites, which originally came to power through free and fair elections, started to manipulate the political system which gradually evolved into a neo-authoritarian rule. In Ukraine it was embodied by President Leonid Kuchma and his oligarchic groups and in Belarus by a much stronger autocrat, President Lukashenko, who relied strongly on his security apparatus.

Democracy assistance work in Ukraine under the Kuchma regime was much easier than in Belarus, since the former state had more political and civic freedoms and was not internationally isolated. Even if oppressed, opposition parties were represented in the Parliament, there was some degree of media freedom, and civic groups and NGOs could function and receive support from abroad. Moreover, the privatisation process had created a new Ukrainian class of wealthy individuals and groups which could, although at high risk, support the activities of the opposition. Western democracy assistance (in the form of financial, material, political and technical help) prior to the historical elections of 2004 did help bring about the democratic breakthrough, but it is very important to stress that the driving force, energy and commitment behind the Orange Revolution was domestic and a majority of the funding came from local sources and not from the West.

For a short while after the two colour-coded revolutions, the Ukrainian Orange Revolution 2004-05 and the Georgian Rose Revolution of 2003, it seemed that a new chapter in the spread of democracy in post-Soviet regions would open, one that would also include Belarus. These hopes not only failed to materialise but a serious deterioration of democratic culture occurred in Ukraine, and alarmist reactions in Belarus and Russia resulted in serious and well thought out steps against democracy promotion in these countries. The leader and face of the Orange Revolution, Viktor Yushchenko, and his partners were unable to keep their promise to develop an open and transparent political and economic system, decentralise power and modernise the administration. Sadly, they also failed to involve players from civil society with whom they had fought, and won, the battle of the cold months of 2004.

Currently the Ukrainian population, along with Western partners, is extremely disillusioned about the state of affairs in Ukraine. In addition, President Yushchenko has lost key “orange” allies, and almost all public support and trust. The incentive of EU membership is for the time losing its original attractiveness. Moreover, further enlargement is blocked for the time being due to internal political and economic difficulties in the Union. On top of that, newly assertive Russia has clearly said “no” to Ukrainian aspirations to join the EU and NATO and is using political, economic and energy pressures to bring Ukraine closer to its orbit of influence. Taken together these unfavourable trends make democracy assistance work in Ukraine particularly complicated.

The trends mentioned above are having a profound impact on the political evolution in neighbouring Belarus as well as Western democracy assistance

given to the country. The negative example of the post-Orange Revolution in Ukraine characterized by permanent political crises, an ensuing deterioration of standards of living, periodic gas-oil conflicts between Russia and Ukraine and the war between Russia and Georgia in August 2008, has pushed both the Lukashenko regime and the EU to rethink their policies.

Democracy assistance work in authoritarian Belarus still bears a resemblance to the Cold War period when the West had very limited tools with which to engage countries behind the iron curtain. Most foreign assistance agencies which developed successful democratization programmes based on transparency and agreements with the governments of Central and Eastern Europe are rather paralysed once it comes to a situation where political and civic freedoms are so severely restricted and foreign organisations so inhibited as in Belarus. The situation is exacerbated by the fact that the country's leadership is not interested in joining the EU as can be seen by its refusal to accept any conditionality measures or its decision to expel American diplomats as a reaction to the economic sanctions imposed on it. For many, it is highly difficult and politically sensitive to support unregistered human rights and protest activities, oppressed political parties, political prisoners or expelled students and professors in a country on the EU's doorstep, twenty years after the fall of Berlin Wall.

Driven by the fear of increased pressures from the big neighbour in the East and the looming economic crisis, President Lukashenko has recently reached out to the EU. He is willing to take some steps towards political liberalization. In return, the EU, recognising the political and economic importance of Belarus, has temporarily abolished the travel ban on the President and most of his government members and re-established dialogue with this country in self-imposed isolation. It is too early to say how this new *real politik* approach will help Belarus overcome authoritarian rule and develop an open society. It is definitely a new situation which will test the EU's approach to democracy assistance in unusual circumstances.

The fact that Russia today increasingly considers Ukraine and Belarus as being part of its sphere of influence makes the relationship between these two states and the West delicate. Since Russia is developing a different politico-economic model and the West needs to improve relations with the superpower for economic, security, and energy reasons, negotiations on setting new rules of the game will be required. Hardly anybody doubts that Russia, even if hit by the current economic crisis, is better equipped and more committed than ever to realise its strategic goals in the former Soviet

region because of the relative weakness of the EU and US. It remains to be seen whether the political elites in Ukraine and Belarus are committed and responsible enough to build rules-based modern European states or whether they will instead develop some sort of authoritarian capitalist model. Similarly, we will quite soon be in a position to assess the political will and unity of the EU and the transatlantic community when it comes to assisting Ukraine and Belarus to build decent and sustainable homes/nations in their own uneasy way in an interdependent Europe.

THE PUSH-BACK OF DEMOCRACY PROMOTION IN A CHANGING GLOBAL POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC CONTEXT

by **Michael Allen**

Rarely are transatlantic issues addressed these days without the tired clichés of Mars and Venus being invoked. Similarly, discussions of US and European approaches to democracy assistance often suffer from overly simplistic or schematic generalizations that tend to obscure more than they clarify. US approaches are often said to be too politically aggressive, focussed on elections, and short-term in perspective, while Europeans, it is claimed, tend to take a long-term developmental approach, stressing institutional development and sensitivity to local cultural constraints on the prospects for democratisation.

In fact, such differences tend to cut across US and European approaches: most US spending on democracy assistance is developmental, with USAID's democracy and governance programs largely devoted to institutional development, rule of law and governance.¹² Similarly, actors within the EU, not least the Central Europeans, Poles, and the new European Partnership for Democracy, tend to be impatient of EU incrementalism, in effect arguing that when it comes to democratic reform, to use Madeleine Albright's term, gradual is fine, glacial not.

The limited value of such designations can even be seen within a single organization. Although the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) is often described as the quintessential American democracy assistance agency, it has what some would see as European characteristics: the NED's four "core institutes" include the two principal political parties, represented by the National Democratic Institute and the International Republican Institute, alongside what Europeans call the social partners – organized labour, represented by the AFL-CIO's Solidarity Center, and business, represented by the Center for International Private Enterprise.¹³

¹²See Thomas Carothers, Democracy Assistance: Political vs. Developmental?, *Journal of Democracy*, January 2009; Tamara Wittes and Richard Youngs, *Europe, the United States, and Middle Eastern Democracy: Repairing the Breach*, Saban Center for Middle East Policy, Brookings Institution, January 2009.

¹³The NED does not represent any official perspectives or US government approach to democracy assistance. The NED is funded by the US Congress through an annual appropriation; it is an independent and private NGO. Neither the Congress nor the White House is entitled to representation or nomination rights to the NED's Board of Directors, which is appointed entirely independently. NED is primarily a grant-giving organisation driven from the grassroots perspective. It does not issue requests for proposals reflecting pre-determined preferences and its grant program responds to proposals generated by rank and file activists and groups.

We have been asked to address the recent trends affecting democracy assistance policies and practices in general and the backlash against democracy assistance more specifically. We need to consider whether these are short-term challenges or present more long-term developments and whether a new fault line is emerging between democratic and non-democratic states.

One of the key trends was earlier referred to as the ‘stagnation of freedom’. Although a stagnation of freedom sounds discouraging, the situation may not be as bad as it appears. Freedom House data do not show many countries that were previously free falling into the partly-free or not-free category.¹⁴ The shift and deterioration in freedom and in the quality of democracy have largely been *within* Freedom House’s status categories, like the rule of law, freedom of association, the quality of government as measured by levels of corruption and transparency, the degree of political pluralism and participation.

In a year of ‘setbacks and resilience’, the most pronounced democratic setbacks came in Sub-Saharan Africa and the non-Baltic former Soviet Union. ‘The decline in freedom has coincided with the onset of a forceful reaction against democratic reformers, international assistance to the reformers and the very idea of democracy,’ writes Arch Puddington, the watchdog’s research director. The backlash reflects undemocratic regimes’ awareness that ‘[i]ncreasingly, it is nongovernmental organizations and democracy advocates that constitute the most effective societal forces for reform in authoritarian states.’

The new US administration is assuming office at a time when some voices argue that promoting democracy is contrary to the national interest. But, Puddington suggests, ‘democracy is not in disarray’ or experiencing a strategic setback. Rather, democracy’s decline in several regions is largely reversible, despite the resistance of powerful authoritarian states.

Similarly, Thomas Carothers cautions against the democratic pessimism prompted by the rise and resilience of global authoritarianism, the backlash against democracy assistance and the end of the Third Wave of demo-

¹⁴The data shows that Global freedom retreated in 2008 for the third year in succession, but the pace of regression slowed and democracy remains ‘the only system of government that demands global respect’, according to the latest survey from Freedom House. Eighty-nine of 193 countries surveyed were free, representing 46 per cent of the global population, according to the watchdog’s annual survey of political rights and civil liberties. Some 42 states are “not free”, accounting for 34 per cent of the world’s population, although China, accounts for nearly three-fifths of that total.

crazy.¹⁵ '[A]lthough the condition of democracy is certainly troubled in many places, 'he notes, 'when viewed relative to where it was at the start of this decade, democracy has not lost ground in the world overall', except for the former Soviet Union.

The anti-democratic impact of authoritarian regimes' foreign policies presents grounds for concern. But, with the exception of Russia's role in Georgia and Ukraine and Iranian influence in Iraq and Lebanon, 'they did not make a significant dent on the overall state of democracy.'

Similarly, the China model of developmental authoritarianism has generated more comment than imitators, while Hugo Chavez's 'political adventurism' and the victory of radical populists in Bolivia, Ecuador and Nicaragua has 'not... significantly blunted or reshaped the basically democratic trajectory of Latin American politics.'

Fledgling democracies may yet fall victim to the global economic crisis, but undemocratic states are even more vulnerable due to their reliance on performance-based legitimacy, Carothers suggests.

Not only is democracy not in retreat, but we might expect a 'continuation of the long-term decline of tyranny and at least modest advances in democracy' over the next decade ahead, he argues in a complementary paper. The new US President's instincts and profile reflect the characteristics that should inform a new approach to democracy assistance – balanced, bipartisan, pragmatic, predisposed to partnership and melding inspiration with restraint.¹⁶

Yet there has been a concerted effort by authoritarian regimes to halt and retard the forward march of democracy, in large part in response to the democratic breakthroughs secured through the "colour revolutions". This has taken the form of a backlash against democracy assistance, detailed in a report prepared by the NED at the request of the US Senate Foreign Relations committee, in which regimes deploy an array of legal and extra-legal measures to stifle independent civil society, target democratic

¹⁵*Stepping Back from Democratic Pessimism*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Washington, DC. February 2009.

¹⁶*Democracy Promotion Under Obama: Finding a Way Forward*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Washington, DC. February 2009. The analysis asserts that 'President Obama's core message, reinforced by his disposition, his political philosophy, and his life experience, is that all people, no matter how disempowered, can gain greater control over their lives. It is a natural message of global democratic solidarity.'

activists and groups, and interfere with international flows of aid and assistance.¹⁷

Of course, repressive regimes have always harassed, imprisoned or killed dissidents and democratic activists. But the backlash has been most pronounced not in closed societies like Cuba, Syria or North Korea, but in those “hybrid regimes” or electoral democracies, including many post-communist states, which had seen an opening of political space. What is qualitatively different in the current backlash is the extent to which autocratic governments close democratic space without relying draconian measures, and the degree of coordination and sharing between authoritarian forces. As one activist recently noted, it is as if Russia wrote a memo on preventing democratic transitions, which was then amended by China, with further comments from Venezuela and Zimbabwe. Regimes are also sharing repressive technologies and coordinating blacklists of activists through bodies like the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

The nature and dimensions of the backlash are further detailed in *Defending Civil Society*, a report co-produced by the International Center for Not-for-Profit Law, and the World Movement for Democracy, a ‘network of networks’ in the democracy field. The report delineates efforts on the part of authoritarian regimes to systematically and in increasingly sophisticated ways through a combination of legal and extra legal measures, to stifle civil society, to constrain NGOs, to stifle independent media, to harass or otherwise disable independent human rights activists through a whole range of impediments to freedom of association.

It outlines principles, already extant in international law, for informing appropriate state-civil society relations, including the right of individuals to form and join civil society organizations; the right of such organizations to function without state interference; the rights to free expression and advocacy and to communicate freely with domestic and international partners; the right to seek and secure resources, including across borders; and the state’s obligation to protect civil society rights. The report authoritatively establishes the legitimacy of democracy assistance as enshrined in international law.

Countries like Russia and Venezuela have signed on to many of the UN conventions that sanctify and legitimise foreign funding across borders for civil society organisations. Article 22 of the International Convention on

¹⁷*The Backlash Against Democracy Assistance*, 2006, a report prepared by the National Endowment for Democracy at the request of Senator Richard G. Lugar, Chairman, United States Senate Committee on Foreign Relations.

Civil and Political Rights, for example, explicitly states that NGOs have a right to receive resources internationally.

‘Democracy will not flourish unless citizens can freely engage in politics and social change,’ an Eminent Persons Group of political leaders and activists said in endorsing the report. Yet the civil society groups that are vital to building and defending democracy face unprecedented threats, they note. The group comprises former Canadian premier Kim Campbell, former Brazilian president Fernando Henrique Cardoso, the Dalai Lama, former Czech dissident and President Vaclav Havel, Egyptian dissident Saad Eddin Ibrahim, Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu and Malaysian opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim.

‘In addition to traditional efforts to suppress dissent and civil society activism, various governments have now begun imposing sophisticated legal or quasi-legal measures to restrict the work of nongovernmental organizations,’ they observe.

The report is an example of how the backlash is prompting activists, NGOs and donors to be more creative and focused in responding to new pressures and constraints orchestrated by repressive regimes. Democracy groups are becoming more flexible, establishing loose networks and partnerships instead of in-country offices. Technology is also creating new opportunities: the recent Egyptian Facebook protests, for example, illustrate some of the benefits of what might be called “amoebic networks” which break-up, disperse and re-form to evade official sanctions.

The principal catalyst for the backlash was the spate of colour revolutions which, for many authoritarian regimes, demonstrated their fragility, their vulnerability to a resurgent civil society and also convinced them that democracy assistance was in fact a form of regime change. They have since promoted the view that democracy assistance is really an idealistic rubric for the projection of Western/US geo-strategic interests into their sphere of influence.

One of the lessons of the color revolutions is that equating democracy assistance with “regime change” was self-defeating, putting local activists at risk and playing into the hands of the authoritarians. But there is probably still insufficient appreciation that, in addition to the legislative and operational restrictions on civil society groups, there is an ideological dimension to the backlash.

Furthermore, many authoritarian regimes have moved beyond reacting to pro-democracy pressures and become more aggressively pro-active in

promoting an alternative quasi-democratic discourse and alternative development models. The whole field of democracy assistance is now highly contested terrain, not least through “democratic mimicry”, from government-organized NGOs (GONGOs) to the pseudo-elections of hybrid regimes.

As the authoritarians become more vocal and confident, the democracies and international institutions are sending a message of timidity and division, as evidenced by allowing Kazakhstan to chair the OSCE and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, ostensibly committed to free markets and open societies, holding its meeting in Uzbekistan, one of the world’s most repressive regimes.

The strategic question is: are we confronting the need for a whole new paradigm for democracy assistance? Even within the West’s democracies, the legitimacy of cross-border assistance, as well as more assertive forms of humanitarian or liberal interventionism, is being questioned.

The backlash also highlights the need to link democracy assistance to the wider issue of the legitimacy of foreign assistance and its legal basis in international conventions and protocols, many of which have been signed by autocratic regimes. ‘At the heart of the debate is the question of what the international system is,’ former secretary of state Madeleine K. Albright has said. ‘Is it just a collection of legal nuts and bolts cobbled together by governments to protect governments? Or is it a living framework of rules intended to make the world a more humane place?’

This trend of legislative restriction on NGOs and civil society organisations is but one dimension of what Larry Diamond calls a global democratic recession. He identifies 23 strategic “swing states”, including China, India and 21 other states which together have a population of more than 1,820 million people or a Gross National Income of 5,748 billion dollars. Ukraine is included because it is the most populous post-Soviet state, as is Egypt because it is the most populous and most politically significant state in the Arab world. China, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Vietnam constitute a group of countries that have been and remain authoritarian, but there has also been a marked deterioration in democratic standards within several of them, notably Russia, Venezuela, Thailand and Nigeria. Whether the push-back against democracy assistance is short-term or long-term depends on developments in these 23 swing states.¹⁸

¹⁸Larry Diamond, *The Spirit of Democracy: The Struggle to Build Free Societies Throughout the World*, Macmillan, Basingstoke, 2008

These troubling developments suggest that the Third Wave of democracy is definitely over. A number of factors suggest that the regression will not be a short-term blip, but more serious and prolonged. Grounds for pessimism arise when one considers that there are at least four different dimensions to the backlash which may be mutually reinforcing;

Firstly, the “operational” dimension of the backlash comprises the restrictions on NGOs, democratic actors, independent media and legal and extra-legal obstacles discussed above.

Secondly, an economic dimension to the backlash presents a qualitatively different dimension. Soviet communism, the last serious challenge to capitalist liberal democracy, survived for several decades because it delivered basic increases in living standards as well as offering a degree of security. This model collapsed, however, in large part because it failed to deliver economic growth and sustainable improvements in living standards.

It remains to be seen whether developmental authoritarianism – or the China model – continues to deliver high levels of economic growth together with sustainable improvements in living standards. But China represents a particular challenge to democracy promotion as the first country to excel in the sphere of international free markets and free trade without conceding political openness. Yet, despite the much-touted appeal of the Chinese model, its sustainability is questionable. Beijing’s system of ‘authoritarian, illiberal, proto-capitalism’ relies on delivering economic growth and stability, and lacks the institutional safety valves and flexibility that allow democracies to endure crises.

The other economic dimension to the backlash is that key authoritarian regimes have been able to deploy considerable resources, not least because of high energy prices which provided extensive resources for financing popular social programs – as in Venezuela; for extensive patronage networks – as in Iran through the foundations controlled by the regime’s Revolutionary Guards and radical Basij movement; for exercising international leverage, as we have seen with Russia vis-à-vis its use of energy supply as leverage against Georgia and the Baltic States, and in Venezuela’s funding of radical populist forces in Latin America. In some respects, these regimes’ international activities seek to counter democracy promotion, amounting to what might be called democracy retardation.

Diminishing energy prices and global economic crisis are now highlighting some of the petro-states’ vulnerabilities, threatening the fragile social

contracts underpinning authoritarian rule. RFE-RL¹⁹ analyst Brian Whitmore has reported that the financial crisis is “sending tremors through Russia’s fragile social contract”. Dissident activist Garry Kasparov cautiously suggested that the financial crisis might generate “more openness among the Russian audience to hear about social, political and economic alternatives”, which could strengthen the democratic opposition.

The social contract underpinning the Kremlin’s ‘managed democracy’ entailed “limiting civil rights in exchange for economic well-being,” said Igor Yurgens director of the Institute of Contemporary Development and an aide to Russian President Dmitry Medvedev. But, he told *The New York Times*, at “the current moment, economic well-being is shrinking. Correspondingly, civil rights should expand. It’s just simple logic.”

Even in affluent Singapore, the People’s Action Party has ruled for half a century due to an “implicit social bargain that it would deliver prosperity in return for restrictions on political freedoms”. It has been held up as a model of relatively benign authoritarian rule, but a combination of poor economic performance and growing civil activism suggest that – as elsewhere – such prosperity-for-docility pacts “may no longer work”.

The third dimension of the backlash is ideological, in so far as even if contemporary authoritarianism does not provide a systemic alternative to liberal democracy, these regimes are developing an alternative discourse and political agenda – of varying degrees of appeal and credibility – which has potential appeal both within their respective states and internationally. Many technocrats from authoritarian or hybrid regimes are visiting Beijing to examine how to combine political control with economic growth. As Timothy Garton Ash has noted, developmental authoritarianism – at least in its Chinese variant – can be projected as representing, in a way that radical Islam cannot, an alternative path to technological and cultural modernity. And that is why it has a potential appeal to authoritarian regimes – even if only as a legitimating discourse – not least in Sub-Saharan Africa and the Arab world.

As Robert Kagan notes, not only has great power rivalry returned but so too the conflict over the values and principles between liberal democracy and autocracy that has influenced the behaviour of nations since the Enlightenment. Of course, autocratic regimes claim democratic status – Hugo Chavez practices Bolivarian democracy, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad

¹⁹Radio Free Europe-Radio Liberty (editor’s note)

speaks of Iran's Islamic democracy, Hu Jintao refers to democracy with Chinese characteristics, or socialistic democracy, while Russia claims it is a sovereign democracy. Significantly, these regimes need to genuflect to democracy as a norm, even while violating such norms in practice.

Yet these regimes also remain fundamentally fragile, particularly those – like Russia, for instance – with little popular appeal beyond a performance-based legitimacy. Declining incomes and high unemployment rates are likely to spark political crises in fragile or unconsolidated democracies. On balance, democracy is likely to prove more resilient than the supposed alternative models based on authoritarian regimes with limited ideological appeal – even to their own people – and which rely on performance-based legitimacy.

“When such regimes stop delivering, what other sources of legitimacy can they fall back on to justify their rule?” asks Marc Plattner, co-editor of the *Journal of Democracy* and vice president for research and studies at the National Endowment for Democracy:

The global economic crisis may well stimulate a similar kind of [competitive] dynamic between democracy and its rivals. But democracy's advantages in such a struggle are not limited to its ability to take a punch and outlast its glass-jawed competitors. Democracy has often displayed a remarkable ability to reform and renew itself. This gives it a resilience that may prove decisive in the competition with its more brittle authoritarian challengers.

The question is whether these dimensions of the backlash amount to such a radically changed environment that we need to consider a new paradigm for democracy assistance. On the basis of a crude periodization of democracy promotion's history, we might identify the period from 1975–1990 with the Third Wave of democracy, initially with the work of the German party foundations, not least in their support for democrats in the dictatorships in Spain and Portugal, and the Cold War conflicts within the international labour movement. In the context of the Cold War, democratic solidarity often and necessarily assumed ideological and politicized forms. Considerable funding was targeted at dissidents behind the Iron Curtain, including Poland's *Solidarność*, and in supporting democratic labour unions and political actors in the Third World, in vigorously contested and often highly controversial ways, particularly in the international labour movement which was the principal arena in which many of these issues were fought out.

After the collapse of the Berlin Wall, a second period of democracy assistance – from 1990 to approximately 2001 – saw the emergence of democratic triumphalism and the emergence of a new orthodoxy around the Washington Consensus, the apparent inescapability of market-based capitalism and a degree of complacency that liberal democracy was fated to triumph. There appeared to be no viable, systematic, comprehensive alternative to market-based liberal democracy. In many respects, democracy assistance became de-politicized, a matter of technical assistance, as government agencies – from USAID to the European Commission – became heavily involved in funding democracy assistance.

There was a pronounced shift in resources towards democratic consolidation, focussing on institution building and governance. In retrospect we can see that this was problematic because it depoliticized an essentially political, contested field. Furthermore, elements of the prevailing consensus Western liberal model or Washington Consensus – neo-liberal market driven privatization and macroeconomic adjustment strategies – led to the marginalization and impoverishment of some of key democratic actors, including labour unions in post-communist societies, which has arguably created a vacuum in parts of Central and Eastern Europe, and in much of Latin America, that has been filled by populist forces.

Democracy promotion is now conducted on increasingly contested terrain. In the 1990s, Western-based NGOs democracy assistance organisations and their partners or grantees confronting authoritarian regimes often faced harassment, expulsion, or arrest. But such regimes have moved beyond *ad hoc* repression to more concerted pushback. Democratic actors and civil society groups are confronted by well-resourced anti-democratic forces, often funded by authoritarian regimes. Civil society groups in Lebanon, for instance, find it hard to compete with Hezbollah or its proxy NGOs which are funded by Iran.

Similarly, in Latin America, Venezuelan funds are increasingly being used to fund *ersatz* or parallel labour unions and divide democratic labour movements, and were successfully deployed to assist populist or authoritarian parties in elections in Bolivia, Ecuador and Nicaragua, and less successfully in Peru.

In Central Asia and Russia's 'near abroad', the Kremlin has been energetically projecting itself through 'soft power' and through political technologists like Gleb Pavlovsky and Sergei Markov. Painful to admit, the latter were actually trained within democracy assistance foundations and now use many of the skills and techniques to coach authoritarian parties

and regimes on how to manage elections, how to establish Government-Organised NGOs, and how to frustrate or stifle genuinely independent and democratic organisations. In other words, they are involved in what Belarusian political scientist Vitali Silitski calls ‘pre-empting democracy’.

Let me conclude by addressing the final question about whether there are fault lines between democracies and non-democracies and if so, what that means. The short answer is yes – and no, depending on the issue and the arena. I think that Tom [Melia – Freedom House] is right that there are real fault lines now that we can see within international forums like the UN, the UN Security Council, the Human Rights Council and elsewhere. Disturbingly, the autocrats have got their acts together in a way that democracies have not. They appear to be better organised and mobilised, and caucus more effectively than the Western democracies. A recent report from the European Council of Foreign Relations, for example, details the EU’s rather shambolic approach in these international institutions.

So the authoritarians are better organised, and these fault lines may be strategically significant, but they are not always clear-cut between democracies and non-democracies. South Africa, for example, has had a shameful record on the UN Security Council, siding with Russia and China, and voting against the leading democracies on Zimbabwe, Burma and Iran, for instance, despite Pretoria’s democratic credentials. On the other hand, following last summer’s Russo-Georgian conflict, China not only declined to recognise South-Ossetia and Abkhazia, but also used their influence within the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation to ensure that the SCO didn’t recognise the sovereignty of the breakaway territories. Given the movements for autonomy if not independence, within Tibet and Xinjiang, Beijing has a vested interest in avoiding precedents for secessionism. But this episode does suggest that we are not facing a new authoritarian axis or *internationale*. This is not a reinvented Comintern: what Joshua Kurlantzick, visiting scholar at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, recently called the new global authoritarianism lacks ideological consistency and political rigour, but it still presents cause for concern.²⁰

What is to be done? There is a compelling case for greater transatlantic coordination, communication and cooperation; for more effective caucusing of democracies within international institutions, perhaps through a structured Concert of Democracies; and for more European commitment to

²⁰‘Monster’s Ball’, *The New Republic*, October 08, 2008.

the Community of Democracies.²¹ When the Community of Democracies was established under the Clinton administration, the so-called Euro-Gaullists led by French foreign minister Hubert Vedrine tried to strangle at birth, and European commitment to the Community has since been ambivalent at best. But this is a line worth pursuing.

Finally, there is a case for a systematic review of foreign assistance, particularly if it relates to democracy and governance. As Larry Diamond has noted, huge sums are spent in the fields of governance and rule of law to minimal democratic effect, training judges and improving court procedures in states that are and remain palpably undemocratic. Rule of law funding would probably be more effectively spent from a democratic point of view in funding legal AIDS clinics, police monitoring and other issues that genuinely empower democratic actors.

In customizing a new approach to democracy assistance, policymakers should consider certain propositions, many taken for granted by democracy assistance practitioners, notably that elections are not in themselves sufficient to build successful democracies, but remain a prerequisite; engaging authoritarian adversaries should not entail turning a blind eye to human rights and domestic repression; isolating dictatorships may not always be effective or feasible, but nor should authoritarian regimes be inappropriately rewarded; and the world's democracies should consistently and actively support dissidents and freedom's advocates.

In terms of the conflict between normative and strategic imperatives, most democracy assistance practitioners would recognise and accept that there will always be conflicts of interest between idealistic or normative foreign policy aspirations and economic, security and other compelling strategic interests. States – even democratic states – are not NGOs or democracy assistance foundations. But we should expect from leaders of democratic states a degree of transparency and honesty in dealing with autocrats with whom they have compelling strategic interests. If you are going to give them assistance, make sure it comes out of a national security or military assistance budget and not from democracy promotion funds. Do not call them democrats, do not call them reformists, be honest about the bases of the relationship and the interests. When our political leaders use a democratic discourse and vocabulary in their relations with autocrats, it threatens

²¹See Europe, the United States, and Middle Eastern Democracy: Repairing the Breach, Tamara Cofman Wittes and Richard Youngs, Brookings Institution, Washington, DC, February 2009.

to invalidate and delegitimize democracy assistance and opens the door to charges of hypocrisy.

In conclusion, despite the recent backlash and democratic regression, democratic forces and actors remain resilient – often in the most adverse of circumstances – and we should always be sensitive to the fact that history tends to surprise us by throwing up individuals, movements and openings that potentially expand the realm of freedom. History also suggests that democracy assistance, while requiring technical expertise and resources, is ultimately a political struggle, a labour of Sisyphus that is likely to remain as contentious as it is necessary.

DEBATE

Challenges to democracy promotion

- We need to make sure that people favour democracy as a political system. There is, in fact, an increasing majority of people who are very dissatisfied with the way the system works today. The issue of making democracy perform better in the eyes of the people it is supposed to serve is an issue which has to be addressed. We need to work towards a new Bretton-Woods architecture and a UN reform. The way we are governed internationally needs to be democratized and be given a new architecture. The crisis that is now enclosing the world will perhaps make people focus their energy on the fact that something new needs to be done rather than just using the same old policies that we have been pursuing over the last twenty years.
- Democracy promotion as a universal value and democracy assistance as a legitimate and internationally accepted sphere of activity has become highly contested. We can see this in the context of a backlash, not just in Russia, but also in other countries. Authoritarian regimes in these countries see it as an extremely illegitimate interference in their internal affairs and see democracy promotion as a form of illegitimate projection of strategic interests of the US and other international actors under an idealist banner. So I would say that democracy promotion is less legitimate and more contested now than ever.
- The international acceptance of democratic norms is a bit of a dated statement. In fact, the testing of democratic norms that is underway in different fora is very significant. In the Organization of Security and Cooperation in Europe, for instance, you have a very deliberate ongoing campaign; some might say an assault even on its activities and the organisation itself, and its policies on democracy promotion and defending democratic values. The same development can be witnessed in Geneva at the UN Human Rights Council. Every time a meeting is convened, democratic norms come under assault by an increasingly active and effective coalition of non-democracies from around the world. We need to be aware of the fact it is not just up to democracies to determine how democracy promotion moves forward; we have to be smarter and think harder about how to remain effective. The danger in believing that democracy is a broadly-held perspective and that democratic norms are accepted, international, norms is that they will appear as Europe specific norms, which is not the case.

Hence, we need to be wary of this problem and keep our focus on what international norms mean.

- When addressing the question of whether or not democracy as a norm is being attacked, we should look at the role of China emerging as a new actor, and the coalition of countries in the third world who are using the system of the United Nations in order to promote non-democratic values. Hopefully this dynamism will change with the arrival of the new administration in the US since this approach is very much nourished by the perceived coalition of interest between the third world and the Bush US administration. We have to get the major stable democracies in the third world onboard and try to weave them into a different kind of alliance than the one they are adhering to today. There are a number of factors that strengthen the standing of democracy and human rights as global norms and these will not easily disappear because as long as non-democratic countries are trying to pose as democrats it confirms that democracy indeed is norm; as long as they organize elections, even fake elections, we will know that democracy is the norm.
- About the backlash for democracy promotion; I think that to a great extent this is a backlash for US democracy promotion due to the Bush administration and its foreign policy in Iraq and Afghanistan. Actions associated with the American presence in Iraq and Afghanistan make it possible for countries to question democracy promotion because it links democracy promotion with waging war which in turn undermines the legitimacy of democracy promotion. Whether or not the backlash for democracy promotion also goes for the EU's activities is another question. Democracy is, although challenged like all established and institutionalized norms, still the prevalent norm among states. Strong norms survive challenges, they survive and evolve over time and become stronger. This is what is happening to norms and principles of democracy today.
- Could we elaborate the point about legitimacy vs. effectiveness? They seemed to be presented as counterposes whereas in my opinion they are instead complimentary, not least in Latin America, where one of the reasons why we are seeing a rise in the emergence of majoritarian populism is because of the state's inability to deliver basic, rudimentary services to large parts of the population. This is particularly the case in the informal, stable inclusionary democracies like Chile, Brazil and Uruguay which have developed pretty innovative social programs.

- Yes, we need to balance our support when it comes to effectiveness vs. legitimacy. This is not just to say our support should be legitimate or effective; legitimacy and effectiveness are very closely interlinked. The key issue is to get political party support. We need to have political agendas driven locally; obviously recognizing divisions and conflicts of interests in societies.
- A part of the explanation for this push-back of democracy lies in the failure of the West's own approach. How can we now address this situation? How can we approach this challenge without making the situation worse; by not going into some sort of confrontation, at least not at an ideological level?
- We now need to be practical; we need to improve our performance. We need to be much more self-critical and the West's complacency about the quality of its own democracy has been our biggest enemy. We need to recognize that. We need to get down working and counter-ing some of these trends whatever they may be. I am attracted by some of the notions of Larry Diamond.
- Democratic promotion is becoming highly politicized and this is a problem since perception matters. Governmentally sponsored democracy promotion projects are in many cases regarded with scepticism in the recipient country. The democracy assistance policies of EU enlargement were linked to fulfilling political, social, and economic criteria in order to make these societies eligible to join the EU and NATO. We are preaching home-grown solutions but very often we impose what we believe needs to be done, including in Belarus. We also need to improve our ability to assess failures in democracy assistance. We need to be more self-critical and look at ourselves, our tools, motives and how we are perceived. We have an enormous image problem; as individuals and as representatives of various organisations. Today we are facing a new set of issues and problems and I urge all of us to reflect on this and not spend too much energy on saving our own way of doing things, our networks and wellbeing. Finally, NGOs have one advantage in democracy promotion and that is the benefit of an institutional memory. Unfortunately diplomats and democracy promoters from governmental organisations are constantly shifted from one place to another for short periods of time.
- Yes, we neglected the socio-economic underpinnings of democracy during the early years of transitions and we also failed to distinguish adequately between programming and democratisation. Having said that, I think in some respect it is the wrong question to ask. Frankly, the other

side of giving local ownerships and responsibility to local democrats is that they make decisions. So it is just not us, the West, that made key decisions – local actors made decisions as well. I would say we made strategic mistakes by disproportionately funding an elite of urban, professional, bourgeois NGOs rather than grass root groups, so *mea culpa*, but you have to get local democrats to accept to take responsibility. This is the other side of the coin of driving local ownership down.

- On business, labour and their respective roles in the democratization process. Take one example, China; the behaviour of companies like Yahoo and Google that are actively assisting the Chinese authorities to track down and identify cyber activists is disgraceful and they have rightly been pilloried for it before Congress. On the other hand, I know from personal experience from labour market issues that a number of western multinationals including the so-called rogues like Nike, Gap and Adidas, have been ahead of the curve and have promoted labour unions' capacity building below the radar. This is not something that they advertise widely to the Chinese authorities but that kind of work is going on.

The push-back of democracy promotion in the post-Georgian world

- Democracy promotion in countries that are neighbours of both Russia and EU will face political and practical challenges in the years to come. Russia's actions will challenge all our efforts in territories ranging from Belarus through Ukraine, Moldova and the Caucasus. Previous speakers have not taken Russia's ability to counteract democracy promotion work in these regions into account. In a situation where Europe is dependent on Russia's gas and energy supply we cannot afford the luxury of telling the Kremlin that prescribing political models is solely our business.
- In the weeks after the Russo-Georgian conflict we witnessed a resurgence of realpolitik in Europe, particularly in Germany. In Britain, the political elites, the so-called "commentariat" are now saying that the invasion was perfectly legitimate, that this is Russia's sphere of influence. Such phrases are now creeping back into respectable political discourse. All of a sudden the notion of spheres of influence seems to be politically acceptable again.
- When we talk about a push-back of democracy assistance, we refer to areas where democracy assistance is connected to geopolitical changes. We notice an increased difficulty in working in countries in

Eastern Europe. This concerns not only Belarus and Russia but also Ukraine and the Caucasus. We find that receiving money from external sources is seen as complicated, whereas in, for example, Latin America we do not notice such limitations at all, regardless of whether the government is leftwing or rightwing.

Democracy and development

- At the intellectual level, a new consensus is emerging, a kind of refutation of the thesis that some form of modernizing authoritarianism must be a prequel for genuine sustainable democracy: that first we need some benevolent dictatorship to achieve a certain industrial take-off before we can afford the indulgence of democratic institutions. This implies that the terrain has shifted intellectually. At the political level, we see that within governments the development agenda is shifting from governance to democracy. Even the World Bank is talking about pushing the agenda beyond the anaemic governance approach.
- In the Netherlands, France, the UK and Germany, Development Ministries are rethinking what they mean by development by bringing in political criteria. This was previously seen as too political for a lot of people. We do not need to equate development and democracy, they are not the same thing, but we are getting interesting indications on how government organisations and bureaucracies are changing to engage in some of the issues that were traditionally associated with democracy promotion.
- It is important that we do not disregard certain theories because they are out of fashion. In political science there have been periods when the most important factors in promoting democracy was economic development. Later it was institution-building, and then civil society and then again free elections. We have to be cautious so that we do not turn developing countries into some kind of laboratory where we go and try our democracy promotion toolkits. It is not only a question of whether these strategies are successful or not; they can actually do a lot of harm. Most independent organisations do not want to receive funding from the state because they know they will lose their independence. But when Western donors give support to civil society it is also a way of making civil society dependent on external donors. This leads to a kind of ownership of civil society which we need to be cautious about. We must take a long-term view of the effects of the things we do.

- The China model is not a coherent model and many of these regimes have adopted a kind of à la carte, or, dare I say this in Sweden, a *smörgåsbord* approach. They pick and choose which elements they like. There has been a backlash against Chinese influence: there have been riots in Zambia; resistance in Angola; and the Kenyans did not like it when the Chinese said that Africans are not suited to democracy.
- We should try and develop a strategic review of democratic assistance. In the past twenty, thirty years our *modus operandi* has largely remained the same. If a private company operated without ever diversifying its products and markets or new ways of doing business, it would probably be out of business by now. There is a realization that our environment has changed radically in ways that we have not fully appreciated and that is why we need a strategic review of democracy assistance.

The transatlantic link

- The United States is a very different actor in the democracy promotion environment. Its credibility in the last decade has gradually become something completely different to what it used to be. Both the EU and the US exert much weaker influence than they used to do and fail to reach a consensus on democracy promotion issues. Credibility is a key factor because democracy promotion is becoming an increasingly competitive business. Therefore, we need to be seen as credible actors.
- For the past few years both the EU and the US have been competing over who is the biggest democracy support spender but in the end it is just a game of numbers; there is no substance behind the figures. When it comes to values, the EU is very coherent in its support for democracy; however, it does not practise what it preaches. Europe is in fact in a mess over the implementation of policy; there is no coherence, no consensus, and hence all efforts to work towards a European democracy consensus are crucial.
- On the comment claiming the United States no longer has a monopoly on democracy promotion: when did the United States ever have a monopoly on democracy promotion? The National Endowment for Democracy, for example, was largely inspired by the German *Stiftungen* in the 1970s. Maybe the United States has had a higher profile rhetorically in terms of political leadership and on democracy assistance but the EU and certainly individual Member States has always talked a lot more about it compared to their actual involvement in concrete action in this sphere of activities.

- What is this question about realpolitik vs. normative? Again in some ways I concede this as a beneficial or complementary trade-off for our business. In US politics you can only justify high levels of expenditure on democracy assistance if you phrase it in a security framework, and this actually predates the Bush administration. Clinton's national security strategy put it in exactly the same terms. However, even the so-called arc-realists like Brent Scowcroft have said very clearly that *"we need to get away from democracy promotion force for rhetorically driven democracy promotion and go back to what we do best, which is giving aid and assistance to labour unions, NGOs, Human Right Activists"*. If that is a realist perspective I am quite comfortable with that, even if they do not want to employ a normative vocabulary.

Sweden as a promoter of democracy and its presidency of the EU in autumn 2009

- Sweden deserves enormous credit for its work. Sweden does not have the image problem of other countries which are dealing with democracy promotion. Moreover, Swedish politicians back the work of democracy promotion. There are very few countries in the EU which are in the position that Sweden is currently in; you have a unique opportunity with political elites backing the issue while often it is only NGOs that are promoting democracy in other countries. The combination of political and NGO muscles underpinned by resources and political will give you an enormous advantage going forward in the area of democracy promotion. The fact that you have time to prepare the Presidency of the EU after the Czechs who will definitely highlight this issue, unlike the Slovenes and the French, makes me believe Sweden has a unique opportunity to achieve many things, not only for yourself, but also by shaking up the EU a little bit. What is more, during the Swedish Presidency, Eastern Europe will celebrate the 20th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall. Numerous events will take place where people will be pressing themselves to think where we are 20 years after the fall of the Berlin Wall.
- The new priorities of the Swedish Government with a greater emphasis on political and civil rights are extremely welcome from the perspective of democracy assistance. One of the major challenges of democracy today is the actual performance of existing democracies and the ability to create a sense of satisfaction among the population about what democracy delivers. The political elite are not able to find answers to the challenges of the world today. As far as a normative

framework is concerned, democracies have indeed a lot to offer, but we are living in an era when the challenges lie in the link between democracy and social justice which brings us back to the question of equilibrium between socio-economic rights and civil-political rights. We have been focusing too much on the socio-economic rights without the political, and it is counterproductive to support democracy without also focusing on political and civil rights at the same time. In that sense I very much welcome the new emphasis of the Swedish Government.

- The new Swedish articulation of development policy in combination with an appreciation of political rights is important. This is a historic step that will hopefully be emulated by other governments in Europe. The significance of this will be determined in the details and the extent to which you can persuade the bureaucracy to care about what the Government says about this new approach to democracy promotion. The work between politicians, bureaucrats, professionals, the permanent representatives in the foreign ministries and embassies abroad on the one hand, and the Swedish development agency on the other, will determine the success of this new policy initiative.
- I wish that Sweden during its Presidency would develop a home-grown EU methodology for assessing democracy assistance because it would be extremely important. The approach should be to first make an assessment country by country, and then assess the extent of leverage democracy assistance has on these countries. I think the Americans are extremely good at what we sometimes are nervous about; a kind of reductionism or measuring things that can not be measured.
- During its EU Presidency, Sweden will be heading the world's largest union in terms of population and economy, which also happens to be the world's largest donor. We carry weight, we are not small, but we have not realized that we also need to express our weight through our foreign and development policy. The EU Member States have a hard time realizing that we need to translate what we are into a common foreign, security and development policy. Yes, we are big, but we have not grown into our suit yet.

SAMMANFATTNING PÅ SVENSKA

Maria Leissner

Demokratiambassadör Maria Leissner inledde seminariet med att redogöra för bakgrunden till den svenska regeringens nya biståndspolitik, som i större utsträckning än tidigare framhåller medborgerliga fri- och rättigheter. Den nya politiken tar avsteg från den traditionella ståndpunkten att det är alltför politiskt känsligt att samarbeta med politiska aktörer i mottagarländerna och att bistånd bättre hanteras av ekonomiska aktörer. Betydelsen av politiska aktörer kommer således i fortsättningen att uppmärksammas inom ramen för den nya biståndspolitik. Leissner påtalade i det sammanhanget att demokrati endast kan uppstå internt, genom inhemska aktörer. Externa aktörer kan således inte påtvinga demokrati men däremot ge stöd i demokratiseringsprocesser.

Leissner förklarade vidare regeringens syn på förhållandet mellan demokrati och utveckling. Det finns inte något etablerat förhållande mellan ekonomisk tillväxt och demokrati men däremot, hävdade Leissner, kan man anse att det finns ett samband mellan demokrati och utveckling. Det så kallade Human Development Index är exempelvis generellt sett högre för demokratier än för icke-demokratier. Ett annat samband som uppmärksammas i den nya biståndspolitik utgår från teorin om så kallade "self expressing values" (ett begrepp etablerat av organisationen World Value Survey). Enligt denna teori börjar människor att efterfråga demokrati först då grundläggande behov, såsom mat och säkerhet, är tillgodosedda.

Den svenska regeringen använder sig i den nya biståndspolitik av en utvidgad definition av fattigdom. Enligt denna definition är demokrati en nödvändig del av utveckling. Fattigdom har således inte endast en ekonomisk dimension, utan även en politisk: Det är endast genom medborgerliga rättigheter som människor har möjlighet att organisera och uttrycka sig och ta kommandot över sin egen livssituation och att därigenom förändra sina levnadsförhållanden.

Leissner framhöll slutligen att den ökade betydelsen av demokratisering kommer att prioriteras under det svenska ordförandeskapet i EU och att enighet mellan EU:s medlemsstater kommer att eftersträvas.

Annika Björkdahl

I Annika Björkdahls anförande behandlades ämnet Sverige som normtrentrenör i EU. Björkdahl hävdade att demokrati som internationell norm är starkare än vad den har varit på länge. En förklaring är att USA inte längre

kan anses ha monopol på demokratisering vilket öppnar upp för ett mer aktivt EU.

Björkdahl framhöll vidare möjligheten för Sverige att påverka EU:s agenda under det svenska ordförandeskapet. Utgångspunkten var att EU är en normgenererande arena som små medlemsstater kan använda som plattform för sina initiativ. Som ordförandeland bör Sverige enligt Björkdahl fungera som normtreprenör och därigenom försöka stärka EU:s normer i olika demokratiseringsfrågor. Sverige borde vidare försöka överbrygga EU:s oenighet vad gäller demokratiseringsfrågor. Hon påpekade att det är viktigt att på ett tidigt stadium finna allierade för att så långt det är möjligt kunna dra nytta av ordförandeskapet.

Roel von Meijenfeldt

I sitt anförande diskuterade Roel von Meijenfeldt det internationella samfundets möjligheter till demokratistöd. En utgångspunkt var att den eufori över demokratins spridning som ägde rum i slutet av förra århundradet nu har lagt sig och man har börjat inse att övergång till demokrati är en komplex process som kräver långvariga åtaganden. Vidare har den internationella maktbalansen ändrats: Nya auktoritära och populistiska stater har uppkommit som aktivt söker motverka demokratisering. Meijenfeldt framhöll att det var viktigt att demokratiska reformer måste ge resultat och leda till social rättvisa, i annat fall kan det leda till att folk förlorar förtroende för sådana processer.

Meijenfeldt hävdade vidare att det är viktigt att utvärdera hur internationellt demokratistöd fungerar. Han pekade sedan på några luckor i EU:s demokratistrategier. Det finns ingen gemensam politik på detta område, och det råder heller ingen konsensus mellan medlemsstaterna i dessa frågor. Det är därför viktigt med ett mer synligt och mer strategiskt förhållningssätt. Vidare är det enligt Meijenfeldt viktigt att uppmärksamma inhemska politiska krafter men EU måste samtidigt respektera mottagarländernas suveränitet. Det kan vidare förhålla sig så att internationellt demokratistöd i vissa fall kan bidra till att förstärka auktoritära regimer genom att budgetstöd inte balanseras mellan den verkställande, lagstiftande och rättsskipande makten respektive mellan centralt och lokalt styre.

Meijenfeldt pekade sedan på några metoder att komma tillrätta med dessa brister i EU:s demokratiseringssträvanden. Han framhöll att det har varit mycket framgångsrikt att använda sig av de så kallade Köpenhamnskriterierna vid förhandlingar med presumtiva medlemsstater. Då nya strategier utvecklas måste man dock ha i åtanke att demokrati aldrig kan exporteras

eller importerats men däremot stödjats och att Europa där har mycket att erbjuda. Meijenfeldt betonade att demokratiseringsprojekt bör vara mycket långvariga åtaganden eftersom de annars inte uppnår önskad effekt.

Tom Melia

Tom Melia framhöll att både USA och EU befinner sig i ett politiskt brytningsskede mot bakgrund av presidentvalet i USA, de kommande valen till Europaparlamentet och tillsättningen av den nya Europeiska kommissionen.

Melia pekade på några faktorer som skulle kunna inverka på framtida amerikanska demokratiseringsinitiativ. En första faktor var Irakinvasionen, som i mångt och mycket tidigare framställdes som ett demokratiseringsprojekt. En andra faktor var att påstådd tortyr och andra ”hårda förhörsmetoder” vid Guantanamofängelset och på andra håll har förändrat omvärldens syn på USA som trovärdig förespråkare av mänskliga rättigheter. För det tredje kan den finansiella och ekonomiska krisen leda till att USA under de kommande åren blir mindre generös med bistånd till tredje världen. Melia framhöll att den enda möjligheten för en amerikansk president att initiera nya demokratiseringsprojekt är att internt presentera dem som nödvändiga för den nationella säkerheten – antingen i ett militärt eller i ett ekonomiskt perspektiv.

En annan brytpunkt som enligt Melia skulle kunna komma att få betydelse för framtida demokratiseringsinitiativ är den ryska invasionen av Georgien under sommaren 2008. Denna invasion var välförberedd och det var således inte fråga om någon isolerad händelse. Melia hävdade att invasionen en gång för alla har satt punkt för epoken efter kalla krigets slut och att en ny världsbild nu håller på att växa fram. Melia hävdade vidare att demokrati som ideal ifrågasätts i ökande grad i den värld som vi nu lever i och att det definitivt ser mörkare ut idag än vad det gjorde för ett par år sedan.

Pavol Demeš

Med Ukraina och Vitryssland som exempel diskuterade Pavol Demeš utmaningar för amerikanska och europeiska demokratiseringsinitiativ. Han uttalade att det finns vissa likheter mellan dessa länder men att skillnaderna också är påfallande. Till likheterna hör deras geografiska läge mellan Ryssland och EU samt deras kommunistiska förflutna. Till skillnaderna hör den politiska utvecklingen sedan Sovjetunionens upplösning. Ukraina har upplevt ett demokratiskt genombrott men någon sådan utveck-

ling har ännu inte skett i Vitryssland. Medan Vitryssland beskrivs som Europas sista diktatur så diskuteras för Ukrainas del möjliga framtida EU- och NATO-medlemskap.

Demeš hävdade att situationen i Vitryssland liknar situationen i de öst-europeiska länderna före 1989 i det avseendet att demokratiorganisationer saknar kunskap hur man ska gå tillväga för att hjälpa landet. Under den senaste tiden har dock president Lukashenko indikerat att han är villig att genomföra vissa reformer och EU har i gengäld upprättat dialog med regeringen. Demeš hävdade att det är för tidigt att avgöra om denna utveckling kommer att leda till förändring av Vitrysslands statsskick. Det är dock definitivt fråga om en ny situation där EU:s hållning vad gäller demokratiseringsfrågor står under prövning.

Demeš betonade att tidpunkten för den ryska invasionen av Georgien och det sätt som invasionen genomfördes på visar att det inte var fråga om någon isolerad händelse. Den var vidare ett strategiskt drag i försök att skapa splittring mellan USA och EU. Ryssland är angelägen om att skydda sin intressesfär, inkluderat Vitryssland och Ukraina, och vill inte att EU eller USA ska engagera sig i denna region. Situationen är enligt Demeš delikat och det återstår att se om den politiska eliten i Vitryssland och Ukraina är villiga och ansvariga nog att bygga upp moderna europeiska rättsstater eller om länderna istället kommer att utvecklas i riktning mot en form av så kallad auktoritär kapitalism.

Michael Allen

Michael Allen diskuterade den allmänna tillbakagången för demokratiseringsinitiativ i ett föränderligt globalt och ekonomiskt perspektiv. Regimer med mer eller mindre auktoritärt styre har under de senaste åren systematiskt försökt underkva det civila samhället genom att förbjuda eller införa begränsningar för alltför politiska organisationer och media. Det handlar exempelvis om inskränkningar i möjligheter till utländsk finansiering.

Vissa av dessa tendenser skulle kunna ses som motreaktioner på internationella organisationers stöd under de så kallade färgrevolutionerna. De auktoritära regimerna blev därmed varse om att demokratistöd kan syfta till att åstadkomma regimbyte och att det ytterst skulle vara fråga om förtäckt överföring av västerländska värderingar. Den ökade restriktiviteten för internationella organisationer är enligt Allen ett tecken på den globala tillbakagången inom demokratiområdet. Allen hävdar att vi nu befinner oss i en allvarlig situation som kommer att pågå under lång tid framöver.

Vid sidan av den operationella dimensionen av tillbakagången kan man även skönja en ekonomisk dimension som kan hänföras till uppkomsten av en ny, alternativ modell till demokrati; den så kallade *utvecklade auktoritära stater* eller ”Kinamodellen”. Denna modell kan i motsats till den kommunistiska modellen leverera hög ekonomisk tillväxt. Vidare har det inom dessa stater uppkommit en alternativ diskurs med en alternativ politisk agenda som sprids internationellt. Den internationella arenan präglas återigen av ett maktspel mellan stormakterna och av värdekonflikter mellan liberala demokratier och auktoritära stater.

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