

Political and Social Sciences Department

Conceptualizing, Researching  
and Evaluating  
Democracy Promotion and Protection

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## **Conceptualizing, Researching & Evaluating Democracy Promotion & Protection<sup>1</sup>**

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### **Abstract**

This essay deals with democracy promotion & protection by established democracies. It first describes how the dynamics and understanding of regime transitions changed from the first to the present fourth wave of democratization. Subsequently, it defines democracy promotion & protection and describes the different components of it. Finally, it discusses the issue of the strategies of the democracy promoters & protectors and takes a critical look at the issue of evaluating of their activities.

This essay claims, among other things, that: (1) In general, the goals of the democracy promoters & protectors are focused on outcomes and less on democracy as an open ended process or procedure of government; (2) There is no apolitical way to democratize and, therefore, there is no apolitical strategy to promote & protect democracy; (3) Democracy promotion differs significantly from democracy protection, but donors are rarely aware of it; (4) For impact evaluation of democracy promotion & protection to make sense, three different levels of impact should be distinguished: the micro, meso, and macro.

# I. CONTEXTUALIZING DEMOCRACY PROMOTION & PROTECTION

## 1. Before the 1970s

Efforts by established democracies to promote “their” type of regime in other countries and to protect these nascent institutions once they have been initiated are not new. Democracy promotion & protection (DPP) has been a weapon in the foreign policy arsenal at least since Woodrow Wilson’s Fourteen Points for ending the First World War. After the Second World War, the victorious Allies were more successful - in large part, because they not only defeated their autocratic opponents militarily and compelled them surrender unconditionally, but they also occupied them for a lengthy period and played a concerted role in establishing new political institutions. In those places where DPP was more pacific, indirect and/or respectful of national sovereignty, it produced much less impressive results. Spain and Portugal remained authoritarian until the mid-1970s. With few exceptions (Costa Rica and, later, Venezuela and Colombia), the countries of Latin America returned to military dictatorship after brief post-war democratic interludes. The “institutional transfers” from European democracies to their former colonies in Africa and Asia rapidly reverted to single-party or military regimes (with the important exception of the Republic of India). The United States conferred democracy upon the Philippines only to see the country turn authoritarian and its continuous military presence in South Korea did not prevent the advent of autocracy there.

In essence, the lessons of DPP prior to the post-1974 wave of democratization were not very encouraging. Not only did it seem that, in order to succeed, the effort had to be protracted, costly and direct - but it could easily be “trumped” by other more pressing foreign policy objectives. For decades, the Cold War and bi-polar military stand-off between the United States and the Soviet Union led many Western democracies to support

“useful” autocrats and to be rather wary of the disorderly and assertive politics of “non-aligned” democrats.

The academic literature on regime transition did not invite outsiders to embark upon democracy promotion & protection. It stressed, among other things, that virtually all non-democratic countries manifestly lacked the “pre-requisites for democracy”. Ingenious statistical analyses “proved” beyond any doubt that countries below a certain average income, without an independent middle class or urban bourgeoisie, with low levels of literacy and education, without the benefits of Protestantism and British colonial rule *e così via* stood little chance of ever becoming democratic. Had potential proponents of DPP relied on this scholarship, they might well have concluded that it was worthless to spend any money or thought on promoting democracy anywhere. It would have been much more productive simply to support “political order” of any type and hope that, eventually, economic development would change the terms of the equation. In sum, whatever the reasons were, DPP was not practiced extensively before the 1970s.

## 2. After 1974

Since the unexpected events of the Portuguese *Revolução dos Cravos* in 1974, over fifty countries have attempted to “transit” from different forms of autocracy toward different types of liberal political democracy. In their interdisciplinary and interregional research on this ‘wave’ of democratization, scholars have tended to revise their assumptions about how, why and where democracy comes about. They emphasized the generic importance of uncertainty during regime change and, hence, the role of specific agents acting in unprecedented ways (and in a considerable hurry) with very imperfect information and very fragmented partners. This, combined often with a momentary element of popular enthusiasm and the mobilization of civil society, implied that the



"normal" constraints of social structure, economic necessity and even cultural predisposition could be suspended. Agreements (*pactos*) could be reached that would have otherwise been highly unlikely. Moreover, if these "transitional" arrangements survived long enough, they might just provide the basis for more stable and mutually rewarding rules that could induce actors to play a democratic political game – even in a limited way with quite imperfect results when compared with the well-established liberal democracies of the West. From this new perspective, much of what the earlier literature had described as "prerequisites for democracy" became "products of democracy" – provided that the actors in these neo-democracies (both rulers and citizens) could agree to play according to a mutually satisfactory (if far from optimal) set of rules for competition and cooperation. Scholars who analyzed these new dynamics of regime transition and consolidation, newly christened "transitologists" and "consolidologists," came to a number of conclusions that are still tentative and controversial, but they include the following:

First, in very few cases of democratization did the actors (or members of the scientific community) foresee its occurrence. Indeed, most happened in settings where the existing wisdom had declared that for cultural or structural reasons, democracy should not have occurred (or, if it did emerge for some unusual reason, it would soon fail).

Second, in their (admittedly, *ex post*) efforts at explaining these unprecedented outcomes, analysts stressed factors relating to human agency over the determinants of social structure or cultural habits. There seemed to be more of a margin for collective choices and assertive actions than was previously assumed.

Third, although all cases had some elements in common (especially, the role of uncertainty and contingency), there was a great deal of difference in what came to be called "the mode of transition" (four of them have been distinguished – pact, imposition, reform, or revolution)<sup>2</sup>, which was stressed as an important intervening variable between



national structural factors and the contingent regime-level outcome. And, not only did these regime changes take place through a diverse set of actors and processes, but these differences seem to be having an enduring impact on the subsequent outcome, i.e. upon the likelihood of consolidation and the type of democracy.

Fourth, the factors that lead to the demise of authoritarian regimes and the actors who benefited politically from this transition process were often not the same as those that favored an eventual consolidation of democracy. "Transitology" and "consolidology" consequently emerged as distinct (but related) sub-disciplines with different variables, basic assumptions and emergent properties.

Fifth, many fewer countries reverted back to autocracy than in previous periods of regime change. Indeed, in several instances when this was explicitly promoted by military or *auto-golpe* (e.g. Guatemala, Haiti, Venezuela) the effort failed.

### 3. Expansion and Diversification of DPP

There are a number of differences between the present wave of democratization and previous ones. The most striking is that "modern liberal democracy" has emerged as the **only legitimate political regime** in most (but not all) parts of the world. Virtually all regime-changers at least proclaim that their intention is to consolidate some form of democracy.

Not only does this literally "invite" established democracies to play a role, but the subsequent collapse of the Soviet *Imperium* removed most of the residual justification for their supporting authoritarian regimes for reasons of international security. During the 1980s and especially the 1990s, the idea took hold that intervention in the internal affairs of sovereign countries for humanitarian reasons (and also for DPP) was not only possible but almost obligatory. In any case, it became much easier to justify internationally and

domestically. Leaders of Western democracies became confident that their respective citizenries would support efforts to promote & protect democracy abroad, even when and where traditionally defined national interests are not at stake (provided, it should be added, that these promotional efforts do not cost too much in public funds, military casualties or commercial concessions). Moreover, they seem increasingly convinced that their institutions, rights and practices provide the **model** that is applicable worldwide. To this end, public authorities and private groups have altered their organizational structures, their internal practices and their resources allocations. This "offer to intervene" found a corresponding demand in "consuming" neo-democracies and quietly generated vested interest in what has been defined as "the growth industry of democracy promotion & protection".<sup>3</sup>

The variety of actors involved in the DPP business has become very diverse. In addition to Western governments bilaterally interacting with their newly democratized or possibly democratizing counterparts, multilateral organizations of a global or regional nature have begun to play a much more salient role, already in the path-breaking cases of Portugal, Spain and Greece. Even more unprecedented has been the emergence of a vast panoply of private associations, foundations, charitable organizations and social movements, most with their headquarters and source of support in established democracies, but interacting with (and, in many cases, sponsoring the formation of) counterpart organizations in politically liberalizing or democratizing autocracies or in consolidating neo-democracies.

Obviously, an actor-centered and contingent approach towards regime change leaves a good deal more room for explicit policies of DPP. During those uncertain transitional moments and, subsequently, in the process of consolidation, the room for maneuver is greater than within "normal" democracies. Initial, often seemingly minor

decisions can potentially have a major and accumulative “path-dependent” impact. While this is, *ex hypothesi*, the case for both domestic and foreign participants, most of the scholars who adopted this approach tended to discount the role of outsiders<sup>4</sup>. To a certain extent, this might have been an accident due to the fact that the early “transitologists” focused exclusively on events in Southern Europe and Latin America. These cases not only occurred in countries with repeated experience in trying to establish democratic institutions, but also before the established democracies had realized the full extent of change that was in the offing and, therefore, before they had put together the public and private organizations to deal with this unexpected occurrence. The subsequent regime transformations in Asia, Africa and, especially, Eastern Europe brought with them a manifest need to include the international context more extensively and systematically.

Academics have responded to this new context by converging to an unprecedented degree on a definition of political democracy as **a method or procedure of government**, rather than as a type of society or a distinctive range of substantive policy outcomes.<sup>5</sup> They have also rapidly produced a set of assumptions, concepts and hypotheses that purport to explain and guide the complicated and uncertain process of regime change to a successful outcome. The embryonic (but rapidly growing) sub-disciplines of “transitology” and “consolidology” can provide an analytical framework for evaluating the impact of DPP – even if it has apparently been of limited utility for those who have been designing its projects and programs.<sup>6</sup>

The following are tentative and controversial conclusions of “transitologists” and “consolidologists” regarding the international context and DPP:

First, all the democratizing countries since 1974 have been affected by the same processes of diffusion across national and regional borders. Directly or indirectly, their



choices and outcomes influence each other -- often across what seemed to be impenetrable barriers of space, language, culture and level of development.

Second, the international processes through which they have learned from each other and been influenced by others have been growing stronger over time. The initial domestic democratizers in Southern Europe could hardly have imagined what was coming, nor could potential foreign promoters & protectors of democracy have realized what tasks lay ahead of them. Those arriving late in the wave have found a very different array of supportive international organizations and policies.

Third, the instruments for the international promotion & protection of democracy have evolved and proliferated. Old-fashioned, unilateral coercion by national government has not completely disappeared (*vide* Grenada and Haiti), but it has been largely displaced by, among other things, threats and promises of an economic nature (from boycotts to promises of most-favored-nation status), contingent on a country's human rights and political performance.

Fourth, what is also novel for this wave of democratization is the emergence of multilateral systems of political conditionality. Formerly restricted to the realm of macro-economic and monetary policy and applied by the IMF, the explicit attachment of rewards, sanctions, memberships and exclusions to a wide range of regional and global intergovernmental organizations - and their monitoring by an even wider range of non-governmental organizations - has become a fairly standard component in today's international environment. Needless to say, the existence and efficacy of multilateral political conditionality varies a great deal from place to place. Nowhere is it stronger, however, than in the network of obligations and opportunities surrounding the European Union.



Fifth, another novelty is the rapid expansion in DPP programs and projects that are located within target countries and actively encouraged or at least passively tolerated by the authorities of these countries. An impressive quantity of external actors has been assisting in liberalizing, democratizing or consolidating regimes by re-writing their constitutions, designing their electoral systems, teaching their party members how to campaign, helping civil society organizations to lobby, socializing individuals to "proper" civic values and behavior, and encouraging trade unions, business and professional associations, and state agencies to set up forms of (good) governance.

#### **4. Domestic vs. International Factors**

At the same time, however, the emphasis that "transitologists" initially placed on the domestic determinants of the outcome of democratization should not be so easily discarded. Embedded in its inductive origins are several more enduring theoretical propositions:

First, democracies, much more than autocracies, rest on the contingent and voluntary consent of citizens that their rules of competition/cooperation are appropriate for that specific national political formation.

Second, in the rapidly changing and uncertain context of the transition itself, outsiders even more than insiders have difficulty identifying actors, parties and movements that can be relied upon to produce desired effects.

Third, once the consolidation of some type of democracy has become the primary issue, then, foreigners with their greater experience and technical knowledge might be expected to play a greater role, but by then the natives will have established their own preferences more firmly and developed their own expertise.

Fourth, *insomma*, the net impact of external DPP upon democratization is likely to be only marginal in determining the outcome - and, hence, singularly difficult to measure and predict. Its efficacy will depend very much on the way that it is "processed" through domestic actors which, in turn, implies the content of DPP will have to be tailored both to differences in national points of departure and modes of transition. Standard "treatments" are not likely to produce standard effects.

Fifth, nor is there likely to be much of a correlation between the sheer magnitude of DPP in a given country and its net impact. Hopefully, that impact will be positive (as intended), but too much of it might well result in de-legitimation when the rules and practices it encourages are perceived as "owned" by foreigners, rather than produced by and for natives. In the best of circumstances, therefore, DPP should be a "self-canceling" policy instrument. The less of it for the most circumscribed period, the better. The institutions that it is intended to promote and protect should become capable of extracting their own resources and justifying their own rules as soon as possible.

## II. DEFINING AND DESCRIBING DEMOCRACY PROMOTION & PROTECTION

### 1. Defining Democracy Promotion & Protection

Democracy promotion & protection is a subset of activities in what has been labeled as the international context or international dimensions of democratization, i.e. all external actors and factors that affect the political regime situation in a specific country. Democracy promotion & protection can be defined as follows:

**Democracy promotion & protection consists of all overt and voluntary activities adopted, supported, and (directly or indirectly) implemented by (public or private) foreign actors explicitly designed**

**to contribute to the political liberalization of autocratic regimes, democratization of autocratic regimes, or consolidation of democracy in specific recipient countries**

This definition excludes, among other things, covert activities by external actors (e.g. “quiet” diplomatic efforts or activities of secret services) as well as indirect activities (e.g. literacy campaigns, improving a population's health, generic forms of propaganda, or promoting economic development). Their exclusion from the definition of DPP should not be interpreted as implying that they have no impact on political liberalization, democratization, or consolidation of democracy, but just that they are qualitatively different in intent and origin. Moreover, the effects of these activities upon regime change are generally very hard or impossible to observe and analyze. The definition also excludes activities adopted, supported and implemented exclusively by domestic actors. In addition, it excludes a number of factors of the international context “without agency” that could positively influence democratization, i.e. all forms of imitation, contagion, learning that emerge from the “normal” transactions between persons and countries.

Our definition of DPP does include a large variety of activities, such as sanctions, diplomatic protests, threats of military intervention when they are used conditionally upon the democratic behavior of recipients, activities to promote the observance of human rights, to educate to civic norms, and the transfer of institutional models - such as supreme courts, legislatures, and electoral and party systems.

This predominantly “phenotypic” definition of DPP based on stated actor intentions should not always be taken for granted because, first, these actors may have other, less overt, priorities - for example, promoting economic reform, maintaining a certain foreign policy, or keeping migrants at home - that might even conflict with the declared one to promote & protect democracy. Second, and much less likely, external



actors may engage in activities that they themselves do not define and consider as DPP but, unexpectedly and unintentionally, might actually do the job.

## 2. Distinguishing Democracy Promotion from Democracy Protection

In the studies of political regime changes from autocratic to democratic regimes, three qualitatively different processes have been distinguished: (1) political liberalization; (2) democratization; and (3) the consolidation of democracy<sup>7</sup>.

The process of political liberalization is made up of two core elements: (1) increasing quantity and quality of political liberties; and (2) encouraging the de-stabilization or eventual collapse of autocratic regimes. The process of democratization is a process in which a minimally democratic regime is established. The process of consolidation of democracy is qualitatively different from the former two processes because it aims at sheer survival of a (newly) established democracy by introducing elements of predictability in an effort to avoid, first of all, a relapse into autocracy<sup>8</sup>. Measures that are considered to be useful to consolidate newly democratized regimes can have a negative impact on the collapse of autocratic regimes and the establishment of democratic regimes. For example, reinforcement of the rule of law might stabilize not only a neo-democracy, it might also stabilize an autocracy.<sup>9</sup> It is therefore of strategic importance to distinguish between the promotion of, on the one hand, political liberalization and democratization and, on the other hand, the protection (consolidation) of democracy. Thus, the overarching concept of DPP is made up of two qualitatively different elements, which can be defined as follows.

**Democracy Promotion** consists of all overt and voluntary activities adopted, supported, and (directly or indirectly) implemented by (public or private) foreign actors explicitly designed to contribute to the political liberalization of autocratic regimes and the subsequent democratization of autocratic regimes in specific recipient countries



**Democracy Protection** consists of all overt and voluntary activities adopted, supported, and (directly or indirectly) implemented by (public or private) foreign actors explicitly designed to contribute to consolidation of democracy in specific recipient countries

### 3. Different Forms of Democracy Promotion & Protection

Besides the huge increase in the number of DPP activities, at least two additional major changes regarding DPP have taken place over the past two decades. First, a shift from coercion in the form of the threat to military intervention to conditionality in the form of threat of sanctions and promise of rewards to promote and protect democracy. Second, related to the first, the sharp increase of cases in which DPP takes place in the target countries themselves in the forms of programs and projects. The latter development is the result of the existence of a minimal consent (and sometimes outright enthusiasm) of target countries to politically liberalize and democratize. Sometimes, however, such consent is more apparent than real where, for example, incumbents perceive it to be better to tolerate DPP within their countries in order to avoid potential sanctions or to obtain potential rewards.

The combination of two characteristics – (1) **nature and degree of consent** of the authorities of the target country; and (2) **primary location** of DPP implementation - give rise to four different types of DPP which are represented in Table One.

**=> Place Table One Here (Democracy Promotion & Protection) <=**

The form of DPP of the first (top left) cell - *coercion* in the form of military intervention and occupation - was relatively often used historically to unseat autocratic regimes or to avoid relapse of democratic and newly democratized regimes into autocratic

regimes. Although its use has diminished, cases such as Grenada, Panama, Haiti, and Iraq show that this form of DPP has not been completely abandoned. *Conditionality* - the second (top right) cell - in the form of imposing or threatening to impose sanctions or providing or promising to provide rewards in order to promote or protect democracy, has quantitatively and qualitatively changed since the 1970s. First, a shift took place from bi-lateral to multi-lateral sources of sanctions. Second, there was a change from imposing sanctions to providing rewards. The latter generally takes the form of (increased) development aid or accession to a prestigious club of international actors - Central and Eastern European states' accession to the European Union is the most powerful example of this instance. In this second cell one finds also transmissions by radios such as the Voice of America and support for opposition in exile since they also have their primary location of activity outside the target country and are generally implemented without the consent of the authorities of target countries.

Cell number three (bottom left) includes activities that are implemented in the target countries and which need a minimum of "*consent*" of the authorities of the target countries, for example electoral assistance or assistance to develop civil society. These activities are labelled as **internal democracy assistance**. Cell number four (bottom right) comprises activities that need also minimal consent of the authorities of the target country but take place abroad, often in the donor country (e.g. judges of the Egyptian Supreme Constitutional Court visiting their counter parts of the US Supreme Court). These activities are labeled as **external democracy assistance**. To underline the fact that external democracy assistance takes place under different conditions than internal democracy assistance and is potentially less effective than the latter, we associate it with the term *contagion*<sup>10</sup> as opposed to consent.



The analytical distinction between non-consensual and consensual forms of democracy promotion & protection is not as empirically neat as it may seem, hence, we have introduced a substantial gray area in Table One of "tolerated" democracy promotion & protection<sup>11</sup>. As mentioned above, a target country may allow programs of DPP to be developed within its borders because it either fears that otherwise sanctions will be imposed or, alternatively, that it will not receive some potential rewards.

The "package" of DPP activities aimed at a specific target country depends on a few major elements: the regime situation in the target country; the political will of its incumbents to democratize; the interests of the democracy promoters & protectors; their technical knowledge of regime changes; and the instruments they have at their disposal. For example, in the case of a country that is at an early phase of political liberalization and has a reluctant ruling coalition, external actors can threaten sanctions, promise rewards, and attempt to develop democracy assistance within the target country - all at the same time. In the case of newly democratized regimes, external actors may lift sanctions and continue to promise rewards in exchange for further democratization and consolidation of democracy, and they can simultaneously expand the scope of democracy assistance.

#### 4. Democracy Assistance

The major novelty of the 1990s has been the quantitative growth and qualitative diversification of democracy assistance (DA), i.e. programs and projects that are adopted, supported, and (directly or indirectly) implemented by (public or private) actors predominantly in recipient countries (cell three of Table One) and to a more limited extent in donor countries (cell four of Table One). By the end of the 1990s DA is made up of thousands of programs, tens of thousands of projects, adopted and implemented by hundreds or thousands of donors in maybe hundred countries around the globe, totaling

hundreds of millions or even billions of US dollars. The activities involved range from training parliamentarians how to better perform their role, educating individuals to claim their rights and do their duties as citizens, assisting the creation of local organizations that monitor elections or government policies, to helping to (re)write constitutions.

The first criterion we have used to distinguish between different types with this wide variety of activities is the question of who or what is targeted by DA: individual citizens, civil society, political society, or the state. **Individual citizens** are exposed to programs that aim specifically and primarily at increasing their knowledge about democratic institutions, changing their values and, eventually, their behavior. **Civil society** organizations of different kinds are targeted - e.g. private voluntary groups (often providing services), advocacy NGOs, interest groups<sup>12</sup> - that aim at creating better conditions often for a limited group of individuals. **Political society** organizations - particularly political parties - aim usually at general political change. **State institutions** are subject to programs of reform in order to create, among other things, a more accountable and transparent set of public authorities.

The distinctions between these four categories are not rigid. For example, in highly restricted political environments, civil society organizations act more like political movements that seek to mobilize large segments of the population against the incumbents and may even serve as the basis (at least temporarily) of an alternate government. The difference between organizations in civil and political society is an important one, since it is our conviction that political liberalization and democratization and, to a lesser extent, the consolidation of democracy are **political** - as opposed to technical or a-political - processes of change. Regime change involves political struggles between competing powers that eventually result in the production of rules. Addressing directly these struggles and powers is profoundly different from not addressing them or addressing them



indirectly, as is attempted with a-political or technical strategies of political transition and consolidation, as most donors do.

A second criterion to distinguish between the variety of democracy assistance activities is to ask the question about the goal of these programs: **promotion** of democracy or **protection** of newly established democratic regimes? For example, training police personnel to become more effective in crime repression and respectful of human rights invokes the protection of democracy and can hardly if ever considered to be a form of democracy promotion. Assisting political parties and social movements to mobilize in favor of regime change is a clear instance of democracy promotion and could actually have a negative effect on democracy protection. This second criterion should also not be interpreted too rigidly. For example, civic education could have a positive effect both on initial democratization, as well as on the consolidation of democracy. In some cases, supporting trade unions which act as a political force bringing down an autocratic regime is a form of democracy promotion, while supporting these same organizations in their effort to become private interest governments, might have a positive effect on the eventual consolidation of neo-democracies.

In Table Two we combined these two criteria, **target level** and the **goal of DA activities** (i.e. promotion or protection of democracy).

**=> Place Table Two Here (Democracy Assistance) <=**

In each cell of Table Two examples of targets of DA are provided. These examples should not be interpreted rigidly. A number of things are implied in Table Two. First, short to medium term activities to promote democracy are more contingent and, hence, are less likely to be effective in protecting newly established democracies. Second, pragmatic

support for the judiciary, the police, and the military and incentives for decentralization are much more likely to have an effect on the later processes of consolidation of newly established democracies than on initial political liberalization or the first steps toward democratization of autocratic regimes. Third, the medium to long term democracy promotion activities and the democracy protection activities tend to overlap significantly. Civic education, support for independent media, the creation and professionalization of advocacy groups can have effect on both the democratization of autocratic regimes and the consolidation of democracies, but are more likely to affect the latter. Fourth, the cells of Table Two that are marked dark gray contain activities that seem to be the most appropriate forms of DA given the specific transition phase. For example, to promote political liberalization or democratization, a donor would have potentially more impact concentrating on the political society than on individual citizens or civil society.

Table Two is not exclusively descriptive. It can help to throw light on the critical issue of donor strategy, although it can not be read by donors (or analysts) as if it constituted a ready-made guide about what to do under specific circumstances. For the sake of illustration let us assume a donor wants to contribute to a transition from an autocratic to a minimally democratic regime. As we noted in the first section of this essay, four “modes of transition” from autocracy to democracy can be distinguished: **pact**, **imposition**, **reform**, or **revolution**<sup>13</sup>. The first two modes of transition are determined by elites. A pact is made when elites agree upon multilateral compromise among themselves. An imposition occurs when elites use force unilaterally and effectively to bring about a regime change against the resistance of the incumbents. The latter two modes of transition are strongly determined by the masses. Reform occurs when masses mobilize and impose a compromised outcome without resorting to violence. Revolution occurs when masses rise up in arms and defeat the authoritarian rulers militarily. The donor, taking the specific



regime situation of the target country into account, has to decide which of the four modes of transition to democracy it prefers to take place and, consequently, who has to be targeted by its democracy promotion activities. If it favors a pacted transition or an imposition, the natural target level will be the state (albeit different elements within the state institutions). If it favors reform, it should focus mainly at facilitating and assisting mass mobilization, thus targeting political society. At the same time, however, some of the state institutions might be targeted, i.e. those that eventually will be willing to make compromises with the (representatives) of the masses. If a donor favors revolution as mode of transition it should also focus on mass mobilization, without compromises with elite factions. This analysis implies that assistance to civil society and to individual citizens will have little effect on the democratic transition while it is expected to have a larger impact on the consolidation of newly established democracies.

In the following we describe briefly each of the four target levels of democracy assistance represented in Table Two. **Individual Citizens** are generally exposed to civic education. It aims generally at transferring knowledge about democratic institutions and practices, socializing individuals to democratic (civic) values, and changing their behavior. Sometimes civic education focuses training of individuals of why and how to cast votes in elections.

**Civil Society.** Democracy assistance targets organizations that are at least partially voluntary and relatively independent from the state. They include, first and foremost, private associations that are formed voluntarily and spontaneously and that focus on the delivery of services to their members and often to non-members too. They also include, however, NGOs that are entirely or pre-dominantly based upon voluntary participation (but not necessarily on voluntary contributions) and that focus on policy advocacy for the production of public goods that cannot exclusively appropriated by their members. Third,



associations representing class, sector, or professional interests are part of civil society, although they are often controlled or even run by the state and may even have compulsory membership under autocratic regimes. Four, assistance to 'bowling leagues' and 'bridge clubs' and similar types of civil society organizations is generally not considered to promote or protect democracy. Programs for assistance consist of one or more of the following items: providing financial resources and equipment, training organizations' members/personnel in skills, socializing them to norms, and transposing organizational models.

Assistance to service delivery associations increasingly involves elements of policy advocacy. Some donors argue, therefore, that this should be seen as a form of democracy assistance, since it aims at enhancing accountability and transparency at the local level. Support for advocacy movements, especially by US donors, is considered to be the most important instrument to promote and protect democracy. In the case of support of human rights organizations under restricted autocratic regimes, this is certainly the case; however support for think tanks that contest economic policies of the same regimes is less likely to contribute to democratization (*pace* what donors themselves say about it). Support for interest groups, such as business associations, professional syndicates, and trade unions, would seem to do little to promote democracy (except if these groups convert themselves into political movements), but it may contribute significantly to regime consolidation once the transition is over. In any case, supporting them can help to create greater social support for policies of privatization, deregulation or other liberal economic reform, even when they have little impact upon democratization and that might actually be the main goal of the donor.

**Political Society.** Rightly so, a USAID official observed that all forms of democracy assistance are political in the sense that foreign intervention in a target country

always arouses controversy, even for such seemingly innocuous tasks as civic education for the inhabitants of poor neighborhoods. For us, external support for political society involves assistance to the specialized organizations and movements of political society. These actors potentially represent the interests and passions of large segments of the population. Moreover, they compete with each other for office, both against the incumbents of an autocratic regime and within democratic electoral processes. Because these parties, movements, and networks do compete with each other, any foreign intervention - including training parliamentarians and party cadres, supporting the (re)structuring of political parties, assisting in campaigns - is bound to affect the terms of this contest and can lead to accusations of manipulation and differential favoritism. In a generic sense, political assistance encourages political actors to accept democratic rules for political competition and to reduce uncertainty. But differences in other characteristics of political assistance depend on its ultimate goal: promoting transition to democracy or protecting newly democratized regimes to relapse into autocracy. In the case of democracy protection, political assistance aims at increasing stability. While in the case of democracy promotion it aims at the de-stabilization of the autocratic regime in order to give way to a democratic regime.

**State Building** is intended to support institutions of public authorities, not to improve their repressive capacity, but to reform those institutions that have made democracy work in liberal Western democracies. This involves such things as equipping legislative bodies with computers to create data bases of their activities and existing laws; setting up documentation services regarding legislation of other countries of the world that might be used to inform law makers while drafting new legislation; and training of their personnel in order to manage these flows of information and to perform better their institutional roles. Judiciary bodies, especially Supreme or Constitutional Courts, have



become a main focus of institution building assistance, providing them with electronic databases on legislation and decisions of foreign supreme courts and to set up exchanges between judges of other courts. Police apparatuses are modernized and personnel trained to become more respectful of human rights. Rarely is the military assisted in the same way and to the same extent as the police, even though in many countries the need to promote civil control over the military is fundamental for a democratic experiment to start and to survive. Finally, territorial decentralization and functional deconcentration of public authorities has become a major component of institution building assistance, presumably on the grounds that devolving power to regional, provincial and local institutions serves as an incentive for greater citizen participation which would be a stimulus for democratic transitions as well as a check on the likelihood that newly democratized regimes relapse into centralized autocracies. The main objective of all state building is to make state agencies more efficient, transparent and accountable with the assumption that this type of assistance will make the new regime more stable. Inversely, however, when provided to existing autocratic regimes, it may make an eventual democratic outcome less likely.

### III. DONORS AND STRATEGIES

#### 1. Donor Statements and Strategy

By strategy, we usually mean a set of assumptions about causal relations and expectations about reciprocal behavior that underpins a chosen course of action. In the case of DPP, such a strategy should include both technical and operational guidelines for setting up programs that are likely to have a positive impact on political liberalization, democratization, and/or the consolidation of democracy. An overview of donors' statements about strategy indicates that this is rarely the case. Most of the time, strategic



statements are nothing else than more extensive and abstract statements about goals. When they provide an explicit account of how these goals are to be reached, i.e. how such programs are supposed to weaken autocracy or strengthen democracy may rely heavily upon such intervening conditions as “civil society,” “pluralism,” “local involvement,” whose relation to democracy is regarded as unproblematic. Moreover, these concepts are almost as nebulous and difficult to assess as democracy itself.<sup>14</sup> Indeed, some even use them as synonyms for it! The Canadian International Development Agency locates its activities within a broad conceptual framework where “democratization,” “human rights,” and “governance” are interconnected, while the nature of this interrelation neither described and nor translated into specific policy instruments.<sup>15</sup> This (deliberate) under-specification of intermediate goals and their ultimate effect precludes actors from specifying (much less adopting) safe, reliable and precise strategies. Rather, it seems to serve the purpose of establishing a “discourse” or normative language that is flexible enough to be shared by many donors and to be picked up by most recipients, thus fostering a semblance of coherence and facilitating a modest degree of coordination. Some donors have straightforwardly expressed their doubts about the necessity to defining an all-encompassing and all-binding strategic framework. Japan, for instance, has overtly opted for a very pragmatic stance and does not consider the definition of any “specific policy” as a *sine qua non* condition for sound programs to be implemented.<sup>16</sup>

When we turn to the part of donors’ strategic statements that concern operationalization or implementation, we find a more fine-tuned approach. Recently, this has undergone important modifications. DPP was initially limited to the transplantation of a limited set of institutions and procedures believed to be constituent of democracy, at least in the case of the US.<sup>17</sup> Subsequently, donors have taken more into account the local context and the dynamics of political change. As a result, they have started to develop

more flexible and responsive strategies. In the USAID document quoted above, for instance, there is a novel emphasis on context-dependency: "social, political, economic, and cultural realities" are said to inform the type of programs adopted. A growing sensitivity to timing has also become very important: in the same document, USAID insists on the fact that "timing can be critical," and that "one-time events (...) can jump start the democratization process." In other words, donors seem to become cognizant of the fact that during the process of regime change "critical junctures" can emerge<sup>18</sup>. Timely and appropriate external intervention during these "windows of opportunity" can have an impact that may be deeper and more persist - even one that establishes a new pattern of "path dependence" toward the consolidation of democracy.

## 2. Implicit Determinants of Donor Strategies

Analyzing a strategy does not only involve interpreting subtle conceptual differences embedded in documents or in the pattern of implemented programs. Much of the actual internal discussion about what works better can only be understood in the light of domestic debates in the donor country. For example, when the issue arises whether a potential donor government should intervene in a specific country that is still autocratic and to what extent or in which sectors, the discussion on alternative options will not only be determined by technical views, past experience, or reasoned assessments. What is also at stake (if not overtly so) are the objectives of the donor country's foreign policy. As recently was observed in the case of the US, "what is really under discussion are not pragmatic judgments about what works and what doesn't (...) What really is at issue, however, is more fundamental than the question whether the 'rule of law' needs to be established before elections. The truth is, many of the people advancing such arguments don't care one way or the other. (...) Debate over democracy promotion is really just a



proxy for a larger war over the overall direction of American policy abroad and at home."<sup>19</sup> DPP has increasingly provided a generic framework for the foreign policies of all Western countries. Therefore, the nature of strategic thinking about it cannot but reflect deep-seated beliefs about the importance of domestic patterns of democracy, the definition of a "safe" international environment for a given country and the international role that its leaders envision for it. This relation between DPP and foreign policy has been rendered quite explicit in the so-called "democratic peace" thesis, i.e. the world-wide expansion of democracy, it is argued, fits the US security interests and favors the flow of international trade.<sup>20</sup>

The linkage between DPP and less principled, more "realist," conceptions of foreign policy points at another determining factor. If it is sometimes difficult to establish a strategic link between normative statements of purpose about democratization and the magnitude and content of specific programs, it is because donors – in particular, government donors – also have less publicly "confessable" purposes, that are better pursued if they can be dressed up contributions to democracy. Put bluntly, the motivations of donors cannot be derived simply from their own statements of purpose - and this makes it all the more difficult to assess whether DPP really has been successful.

### 3. Implicit Goals of Democracy Promotion & Protection

The "unconfessable" purposes can be of a very different nature, ranging roughly from the economic to the political. They can be limited to the recipient country or have a broader intended impact. For instance, DPP frequently has been used as an instrument for promoting economic liberalization. This has been the case in the Middle East where some donors emphasize those aspects of political liberalization that serve economic purposes.<sup>21</sup> For example, the creation of a safer and more attractive context for foreign capital flows



can be found behind the emphasis on establishing the "rule of law," which becomes reduced to a mere concern for more stable and predictable legal framework for commerce. These programs aiming at economic liberalization usually assume that the donor country will derive benefits from the creation of freer markets for consumption, investment and production, even if the impact of this upon democracy promotion & protection is by no means clear. In extreme cases, economic benefits are directly built into donor activities under the form of clauses restricting procurement to its own firms.

As far as confessedly political goals are concerned, it is useful to distinguish between two strategic orientations. The first concerns the establishment and consolidation of generic political **processes**, such as free and fair elections or collective bargaining between capital and labor - without regard who wins or loses in these processes. The second is concerned precisely with these **outcomes** namely, helping one political party to win elections or one social partner to strengthen its bargaining capacity. Obviously, this conceptual distinction is not always easy to make empirically. Programs aimed at strengthening the electoral process easily lend themselves to discrete forms of partisan sponsorship. Policies in pursuit of economic liberalization almost always imply that specific organized interests (business associations and, even more, trade unions) not be involved in "market distorting" practices with obvious consequences for the distribution of benefits.

Strategies of DPP can also be informed by political goals at the international or regional level. For example, the peace agreement between Egypt – still relatively authoritarian – and Israel - generally considered to be a democracy which deprives a substantial percentage of those residing in its territory of full citizenship rights - is used to justify limiting DPP activities in Egypt because a more democratic regime in this country might take a less benign position toward Israel. Other donor objectives reflect their

domestic policy concerns even when these are to mentioned. In the case of continental Europe, one can argue that some DPP programs are aimed at containing migration flows from recipient countries on the grounds that a more democratic regime should be better able to satisfy the demands of its subjects and, hence, they would have less incentive to leave - although available data shows no convincing correlation between the nature of the political regime and the economic performance of a country. This policy has been particularly apparent in the relations between European Union members and the Maghreb countries.

#### 4. Bureaucratic Factors Influencing Strategy

Inevitably (but variably) donor strategies are influenced by bureaucratic structure and organizational culture. They also differ along a continuum running from governmental to private types of donors. Governmental agencies are more likely to be constrained by domestic political calculations, if not by overt pressures, while NGOs seem to enjoy a wider room of strategic maneuver - hence, the tendency for the former to "off-load" tasks on the latter. Privately managed organizations drawing on public funds - such as the National Endowment for Democracy, for instance - combine both features. From an organizational point of view, one can hypothesize that governmental agencies depend more upon bureaucratic structures with their more complex, slower and more cautious decision-making processes. Smaller organizations, especially if they are private and spending private money, seem more likely to respond more quickly, to adopt more flexible strategies and to be willing to take greater risks. The time elapsed between implementation and feed-back also should vary significantly depending on the same factors. Access to financial and technical resources will also be a discriminatory element in the strategy adopted. The smaller budgets of most NGOs should orient the donor toward small-scale,



cost-efficient strategies, while government agencies spend more on overhead costs, planning, research and evaluation. This, incidentally, does not guarantee better results for the latter, but it does generate more data for the analyst.

Organizational factors also seem to have an impact on the involvement of recipients in the implementation of projects. As mentioned above, donors with tight budget constraints, especially private donors, tend to rely on local agents for the implementation of projects, although recent developments have also placed budget constraints on large, publicly funded agencies. But these constraints are usually of a different kind. Government donors have to produce evidence of efficiency and success – the so-called “Management for Results” approach – to its domestic constituents. As a result, they tend to dedicate more funds to evaluation, although these may have little or no effect on revising their overall strategy.

#### **IV. EVALUATING DPP: PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS**

##### **1. Double-Role of Evaluation for Donors**

In the previous section, we sketched the emergence of the global democratization agenda because it provides the framework within which evaluation issues are formulated. More precisely, it is within this agenda that the parameters regulating evaluation procedures have to be set. Only from clear, reliable and precise statements of purpose can criteria to assess impact be derived. However, by using a single label, “Democracy Promotion & Protection,” to cover such a wide range of external interventions we have made the task more difficult. There are two (related) problems. First, the conceptual stretching that characterizes donor discourse on democracy. Second, the very general terms in which their objectives are formulated. The current proliferation of public and private



organizations claiming to promote democracy, no doubt, contributed to broadening the scope of activities falling under that *rubrique*. In the process, the concept of democracy itself has been so stretched that it now covers such a wide range of items that it is of little analytical utility. For example, "conflict prevention" is often included within the scope of DPP, even though it is not always obvious that it contributes to democratization. Using the label indiscriminately entails the risk of confusing a means of legitimization with a statement of purpose and makes more difficult the selection of appropriate criteria for evaluation. One can do a good job in preventing conflicts or designing economic reform programs without necessarily making much of an independent contribution to regime change, even less the consolidation of democracy. Conflicts can be resolved by undemocratic means. Democracies are supposed to be compatible with a wide range of economic policies. These activities should be assessed and evaluated according to their own criteria, not according to their potential impact on the evolution of the polity toward Western democratic forms. The wider the conceptual scope of DPP, the looser will be the probable relationship between the achievements of democracy promoters & protectors and the democratization process itself.

Another obstacle to the design of sound assessments is the high degree of generalization and abstraction of the terms in which donors couch their objectives. They leave a great deal open to subjective interpretation. Civil society assistance provides a typical example of how the description of DPP programs tends to undermine any evaluation effort. What one finds in the donors' documents is a set of convergent assumptions and beliefs about the positive contribution of civil society to democracy *en général* – a set of ideas which is particularly difficult to translate into appropriate practices. Everybody agrees that some type of civil society is a major element of established democracies, while the crucial role of grass-root mobilization in the fall of

communist regimes in Central and Eastern Europe has reinforced the idea that some type of civil society is a major requisite of democracy. This powerful example has certainly convinced donors that civil society is a "good thing". Yet, it seems that donors ignore the possibility that units of civil societies are not all homogeneous, liberal, democratic and unified. More often than not, they are ridden with conflicting claims to representations, competing world views and rivalry over resources and power positions. They can even mobilize around ethnic or religious cleavages that are mutually intolerant. Donors seem to assume that units of civil society are necessarily independent of the state, even destined to oppose the use of public authority, when in many cases civil society and state interests are intertwined, even self-reinforcing around national interests<sup>22</sup>. Not surprising then, an overview of the documents and statements on civil society assistance by major donors reveals that a rigorous definition and a corresponding typology of organizations are still lacking<sup>23</sup>.

In practice, when donors support civil society, they tend to concentrate their efforts on highly visible advocacy NGOs and think tanks based in the national capital that have a Western structure and, often, are staffed by European or US trained personnel. This implies an exclusion of specifically political organizations (i.e. political parties and related movements). To change autocratic regimes, mass political mobilization is often necessary and this is most often organized and guided by parties and their allied movements. The end result is hardly neutral. External donors select specific social groups or organizations in civil society according to their criteria and values, and favor them over others. Being more explicit about these political or strategic goals would allow for the formulation of more apposite criteria for later evaluation. The German political foundations, which are the least transparent among contemporary democracy promoters & protectors tend to adopt evaluation procedures and program designs that involve specific and often partisan



political goals and avoid vague generalizations and claims about democratization writ large.

The train of thought in current research regarding the role of civil society in explaining economic performance and the entrenchment of democratic practices rests on the notions such as “trust” and “social capital,” which, apart from being controversially, are not easily converted into operational guidelines. If associability *as such* generates the civic virtues that sustain institutional performance and democracy, why should the donors not sponsor bowling clubs and bridge clubs, instead of NGOs?

## 2. Unintended Effects of DPP

Program evaluations rarely address the issue of the possible unintended effects of the projects under scrutiny. Policy outcomes can get distorted and they can generate negative as well as positive externalities. In other words, it is not sufficient just to measure the extent to which a specific goal has been reached. The “complete evaluator” has to deal with the entire array of changes emanating from a specific program or project. It is a common temptation to limit the notion of impact to those results which bear a manifest relationship of causality to the statement of purpose of the donor and to overlook side-effects which do not seem related at first sight. It is all the more tempting to do so since only the former type of impact entitles one to address the narrow issue of project success or failure - the two notions which really seem to matter to policy makers and donors. We will briefly examine some possible side-effects of donor intervention.

Donors are often perceived as ‘external actors’ who provide support from outside and limit themselves to transferring resources and know-how to partner organizations that carry out their own agenda. Whether they “strengthen institutions” or “build capacities”. Their role is usually presented as that of mere “facilitators” who provide technical or



logistic support. In other words, their intervention does not seem to alter the nature of the partner organization. Recent research has shown that the donor-recipient relationship is much more interactive and does affect the behavior, the structure and the political status of the recipient. These unintended side-effects are usually overlooked and yet they constitute potentially very important factors in the overall impact of DPP. Although the language is usually that of "equal partnership," the actual donor-recipient relation is one of dependency. For many NGOs entering into such a relation with a donor organization means putting the emphasis on activities compatible with the donor's goals and conceptions and it sometimes means modifying one's established links to the community or constituency it serves. Recipients tend to develop upward linkages and accountability to their donor which is potentially detrimental to downward accountability to their members<sup>24</sup>. Whether as recipients or contractors of external organizations, NGOs run the risk of losing their identity as they absorb external organizational norms and standards. This is not necessarily a matter of "donor capture." Recipients are not always passive targets that are selected according to donors' standards. They tend to adapt to the discourse of the donors and to pay at least lip service to their values and ideas in order to increase the likelihood of funding. In a similar manner, the increasing number of organizations on the DPP scene and the "associational explosion" of the past decades have contributed to shaping a very competitive market for donor funds. As a result, the organizational culture of NGOs has undergone tremendous changes, increasingly relying on managerial competence and financial skills and, thus, shifting the emphasis from militancy and voluntary action to technocracy and paid labor, with its concomitant dose of depolitization.

Unintended effects of democracy assistance can also be due to inter-donor communication. There is much evidence that information exchanges and consultative

groups between donors have been instrumental in developing a broad consensus about the goals and norms of DPP. Differences between donors are less substantial than in the past, and they are mostly differences of emphasis on diverse components of a broadened but increasingly unified agenda. Some organizations will have a more normative approach; others a more technical one. Some will deal with the judiciary and human rights, others will focus on elections. Such differences express a division of labor among the donors rather than a divide in political or ideological purposes. As an important consequence of these developments, whomever they turn to, potential grantees will find similar standards and expectations, and virtually identical conceptions of political development and democratization. In other words, there is a discrepancy between a coherent and unified agenda of the donors and a diversity of objectives and working methods among the recipients. It is unclear the extent to which large donors, in particular, can foster heterogeneity in their programs to promote civil society development. Too much coordination among donors entails the risk of creating "super-grantees" which penetrate the donor network simply because meeting the requirements of one donor means meeting those of others. This, in turn, generates a divide between those recipients which accept and adapt to donor norms and thus enjoy funding, visibility and a certain influence - often represented or chaired by locals educated in the UK or the US, sharing a certain managerial culture with the donor - and those that are excluded from the game.

Evaluating such side-effects and devising ways to avoid them is not easy, although, some tentative guidelines can be formulated. First, it should be possible to include in the project evaluation an analysis of how recipients evolved over the long run, not only in terms of enhanced efficiency or advocacy capacity (formal or technical qualities that are supposed to be increased by external assistance), but also in so far as their agenda of activities, substantial commitments and public discourse are concerned. The evolution of



linkages with various social groups that it represents or interacts with should also be taken into account. Second, if they want to avoid unintended effects of “donor capture” or of recipient “opportunism,” donors should de-dramatize project failure and explicitly adopt a more experimental stand. This might mean not sponsoring always the same type of organizations or even the same organizations, even if they have proven to be reliable and successful partners. Donors are usually reluctant to explore such possibilities for several reasons. In the first place, for political foundations or state agencies, failure means primarily misallocating public funds for which they are accountable, which impunes their own legitimacy. To prevent this, donors have tended to develop rather tight selection and monitoring procedures and to favor *ex ante* assumptions over *ex post* assessment. These guidelines strongly limit the possibility for experimenting with diversified working methods, recipients and types of operations. “Private” donors, such as the Soros Foundation, may be better equipped for adopting an experimental approach, but they are sometimes viewed with contempt by official donors who charge them with “splashing money around” without any coherent strategy. In any case, their scale of operations and flexibility allow them to be more innovative and, sometimes, more cost efficient.

### 3. Conceptual Limits and Political Constraints of Evaluation

If unintended effects of democracy assistance programs are important and deserve more attention, existing approaches to evaluation raise problems on their own. Their limitations can be explained by two factors: institutional constraints and conceptual obstacles.

**Institutional constraints.** A wide range of institutional, financial and political factors shape the extent and the procedures of evaluation. The domestic context in which donors operate and their constraints in terms of accountability, accountancy and political



legitimacy are the most salient aspects of the multiple pressures bearing upon their activities and public statements. Actually, donor concern with evaluation is relatively new. The pace of political events and democratic transitions in the late 1980s and early 1990s, as well as the high level of demand for technical or political assistance, induced donors to put emphasis on pragmatic and quick responsiveness - rather than on planning and evaluation. Only when domestic and public concern arose about the high levels of expenditure for foreign aid and the benefits derived from it (especially in the US), did donors find themselves under pressure to produce signs of success and, thereby, to legitimate their activities. An organization such as the National Endowment of Democracy, for instance, has been living under the threat of seeing its yearly endowment refused almost since its inception. The evolution of public finances in donor countries and budget cuts affecting their institutions contributed to building up such pressure. Evaluations have provided donor agencies with a means of producing public proofs of usefulness and success, and of meeting the requirements of official accounting. This domestic orientation certainly explains why "assessments of political aid programs are generally positive in terms of their impact on the process of democratization and tend to exaggerate the significance and contribution of these programs"<sup>25</sup>. Seen in such light, evaluation reports can be understood as being primarily motivated by accountability requirements. Although they are not the same thing and obey a different logic, the boundary between the two notions is blurred in practice, since evaluation reports serve domestic purposes as well. Donor accountability to their ministries or parliaments should not be confused with program evaluation - a practice which is unfortunately rather common. While accountability concerns reporting the formal and proper use of funds assigned to the donor, evaluation focuses on the impact of the programs. Too often, evaluations limit themselves to merely accounting for operational expenses and correlation

with the political developments in the recipient countries. Accountability then, facing a vague description introduces strong biases in the assessment procedure, especially toward highly visible projects. This is rather obvious in the European Union's Phare and Tacis Democracy Programme evaluation, which takes as one of its assessment criteria the visibility of the projects.<sup>26</sup> While visibility is clearly instrumental for the donor in terms of domestic accountability, it may be argued that most visible projects are not necessarily the ones that have more impact. Finally, the context of budget cuts which most donors face entails an important consequence for the practice of evaluation. Since it often serves the purpose of justifying donor spending in an adverse context and to reassure worried controllers, evaluation has paradoxically become a central issue precisely when less funds are available for it. In such a situation, donors face the risk of dedicating too much resources to evaluation operations, thus furthering decreasing their volume of field operations. Potential recipients, in that case, will be the first victims of budget cuts. In comparison, small donors with limited resources and small structures tend to develop cost-effective evaluation procedures. They avoid intermediaries such as consultants and favor direct relationship with the recipients. The French Fondation Jean Jaurès, for instance, does not conduct evaluations as such. Instead, direct feedback from the recipients is systematically gathered and used as a corrective device. This kind of demand-driven or recipient-driven evaluation may not be very illuminating about the broader impact of the concerned projects, but it certainly makes the donor more sensitive to the recipient's point of view, which is not always the case with the standardized quantitative evaluation procedures.

**Conceptual obstacles.** Scholars and observers agree that there is no generally accepted method for evaluating DPP programs. Rather, there exist a variety of donor-specific approaches. Evaluation research has also outlined the main obstacles that can



undermine the validity of existing evaluations<sup>27</sup>. According to Mark Robinson, these are of two kinds: "the methodological shortcomings of existing approaches are that most evaluations either focus on measurable project outputs or seek evidences of impact in terms of contribution of donors to the macro-level political change."<sup>28</sup> The latter tends to assume rather than to prove the impact of individual projects on the entire process of democratization, even in the absence of any clear causal relationship between the two. In spite of the difficulties, donors continue to claim the existence of such a relationship, even when they are aware of the conceptual pitfall. The evaluation of the European Union's Phare and Tacis Democracy Programme, while stressing the constraints such as a "clear set of indicators by which one can single out the impact of a special project" and "the lack of counterfactual evidence" which would allow one to "know the outcome for the institutions if the programmes had not been established," still attempts to measure impact against the "contribution of the projects to substantive [*sic*] democracy".<sup>29</sup> This example shows that evaluation shortcomings are better explained by other reasons than mere conceptual obstacles. Donors are usually eager to underline their contribution at the highest level of political development and formal evaluations, more than explicit statements of purpose, provide an opportunity to do it.

In order to avoid such problems, some donors focus instead on direct project (micro level) impact, without seeking to build complex causal chains from the micro to the macro level. The main advantage of this approach is to put emphasis on objective, limited and measurable results. However, the risk in putting too much emphasis on quantification is to take into account only short-term visible and intended effects, while ignoring long-term processes that are less easy to monitor and rarely lend themselves to quantitative assessments as well as unintended effects.<sup>30</sup>



#### 4. From Two to Three Levels of Evaluation and Analysis

As we have seen, two levels of analyses and evaluation have been used by democracy promoters & protectors. The **macro** - i.e. the political regime - level is where, for a variety of reasons, donors argue that their activities have significant impact, albeit they never provide convincing proof of it. Instead, on the **micro** level - i.e. the level of targets of their projects such as single organizations, institutions, or individuals - donors engage in significant evaluation efforts. However, in micro evaluation, donors prefer analyses of **output** (e.g. the number of participants in a civic education project) over the analyses of **outcome** (e.g. the extent to which participants increased their knowledge and changed their values and behavior after having been exposed to a civic education project). In addition, as we saw, they don't look at unintended effects of their projects and they adopt a very limited time frame which begins at the beginning of project implementation and stops at the end of the implementation.

Increasingly, scholars and practitioners are looking for middle-range approaches that would go beyond mere output measurement and would take into consideration political and social impact in a limited context<sup>31</sup>. In fact, a potentially more promising level to analyze DPP is the **meso** level or **partial regime** level. We have defined as partial regimes: "systems of linkages and sets of distinctive rule between authorities and a variety of social groups, thus defining multiple sites for the representation of these groups and the resolution of possible conflicts<sup>32</sup>." Instances of partial regimes are, among other things, elections, party systems, NGO legal and political environments, territorial representation (e.g. federalism, decentralization), civil-military relations, labor-capital relations, ethnic relations, division of power between the executive, legislative, and judiciary, etc. A meso perspective, acknowledges that even if donors provide assistance to a single NGO, this affects large parts or even the entire NGO community and the relationship between the

community and the state/government. In practice, donors do much more than providing assistance in the forms of projects to single NGOs. For example, they increasingly lobby (or force) target countries' governments to take a more positive stand towards NGOs, including adopting new more liberal NGO laws. In addition, and very importantly, donor projects never consists exclusively of the transfer of financial means to, for example, a NGO, but include necessarily the transfer of information, equipment, skills, norms and institutional models. Finally, donors do not act in a vacuum or interact with a passive recipient. In fact, donors are strategic actors that interact not only with recipients - which are strategic actors themselves - but also with other actors at home (e.g. their parliaments) and in the recipient country (e.g. governments), including other DPP donors. For these reasons, it seems to be more promising to analyze the relations between a specific and limited subset of organizations and/or institutions that are subject to DPP, than to exclusively focus on the micro or on the macro level. Micro level analyses of outcomes can be useful instruments for sound meso level analyses, especially if they also focus on unintended effects and adopt time frame that precedes and extends beyond the life of the project. Macro level analyses can only be based upon meso level analyses. For example, if DPP has had a positive effect on advancing the observance of human rights under an autocratic regime, such DPP activities can be said to have had a positive effect on the political liberalization of a country with an autocratic regime. Or, if DPP has had a positive effect on creating large political movements to mobilize for regime change, such DPP activities can be said to have had a positive effect on the democratization of a country with an autocratic regime. And finally, if DPP has had a positive effect on civil-military relations (in the sense that the military accepts to not interfere with politics), such DPP activities can be said to have had a positive effect on the consolidation of democracy.

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<sup>2</sup> Terry L. Karl, Philippe C. Schmitter, "Modes of Transition in Latin America, Southern and Eastern Europe", *International Social Science Journal*, 1991, Vol. 128, pp. 269 - 284

<sup>3</sup> Thomas Carothers used this term first

<sup>4</sup> But not all, see for example Geoffrey Pridham (ed.), *Encouraging Democracy: The International Context of Regime Transition in Southern Europe*, Leicester University Press, 1991 and Laurence Whitehead (ed.), *The International Dimensions of Democratization: Europe and the Americas*, Oxford University Press, 1996

<sup>5</sup> Philippe C. Schmitter, Terry Karl, "What Democracy Is ... And Is Not", *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 2, No. 3, pp. 75 - 88

<sup>6</sup> Thomas Carothers, "Democracy assistance: The Question of Strategy", *Democratization*, 1997, Vol. 4, No. 3, pp. 109 - 132

<sup>7</sup> One could add: (4) Improving quality of democracy - understood here as expanding the democratic process beyond its core 'procedural' elements

<sup>8</sup> On the fundamental different nature of consolidation of democracy see Philippe C. Schmitter, Nicolas Guilhot, "De la transition à la consolidation. Une lecture retrospective des *democratization studies*", to be published in the *Revue Française de Science Politique*. Also available in an English version under the title: "From Transition to Consolidation: Extending the Concept of Democratization and the Practice of Democracy", 1999

<sup>9</sup> It might be worthwhile stressing that the "rule of law" is not democratic per se: to become so, it must include equal citizenship rights and not be limited to the securing of property rights or free circulation of capital.

<sup>10</sup> The way the term contagion is used here differs from the way we have used it before. See Philippe C. Schmitter, "The Influence of the International Context Upon the Choice of National Institutions and Policies in Neo-Democracies", in Whitehead (1996)

<sup>11</sup> Similarly the analytical distinction between inside and outside the target for the primary location of activity is not as neat as represented in the table

<sup>12</sup> In this essay we distinguish the following types of organizations: Private voluntary organizations: a subset of civil society organizations that focuses on service delivery and community development; Civil society organizations: all organizations in civil society; Non-governmental organizations: a subset of civil society organizations that focuses pre-dominantly on advocacy and issues of public interest; Interest groups: organizations that pursue specific interests of their members

<sup>13</sup> Karl. Schmitter (1991)

<sup>14</sup> See, for example, USAID, "USAID's Strategies for Sustainable Development. Building Democracy". at: <http://www.info.usaid.gov/democracy/strategy.htm>

<sup>15</sup> CIDA, "Government of Canada Policy for CIDA on Human Rights, Democratization and Good Governance", December 1996. This is also reflected in the naming of bureaucratic departments such as the Governance and Democracy of USAID or the Department for Human Rights, Democracy, and Good Governance of the Dutch Foreign Ministry.

<sup>16</sup> Quoted in: Simia Ahmadi, "Document de Base. Problèmes clés concernant les pratiques des donateurs: droits de l'homme et aide au développement". Centre de Développement de l'OCDE / Agence Canadienne de Développement International, 1996

<sup>17</sup> The point is stressed by Carothers (1997), esp. p. 112

<sup>18</sup> See Ruth Berins Collier, David Collier, *Shaping the Political Arena. Critical Junctures: The Labor Movement and Regime Dynamics In Latin America*, Princeton University Press, 1991

<sup>19</sup> Robert Kagan, "Democracy Promotion as an Objective of Foreign Policy." Paper delivered at the conference on International Relations and Democracy, Warsaw, June 26-28, 1998, pp. 2 - 3.

<sup>20</sup> See Bruce Russett, *Grasping the Democratic Peace: Principles for a Post-Cold War World*, Princeton University Press, 1993



<sup>21</sup> This point is developed in Imco Brouwer, "Civil Society Assistance to the Arab World: The Cases of Egypt and Palestine", to be published in Thomas Carothers, Marina Ottaway (eds.), *Rethinking Civil Society Assistance*, Brookings (forthcoming)

<sup>22</sup> Jean-François Bayart, *L'Etat en Afrique. La politique du ventre*, Fayard, 1989 and Beatrice Hibou, "Banque mondiale: les méfaits du catéchisme économique", *Esprit*, August – September 1998, pp. 98 - 140

<sup>23</sup> Mark Robinson, "Strengthening Civil Society through Foreign Political Aid", Institute of Development Studies, Sussex, ESCOR Research Report R 6234, September 1996

<sup>24</sup> See for example David Hulme, Michael Edwards (eds.), *NGOs, States and Donors : Too Close for Comfort?*, New York : St Martin's Press, 1997

<sup>25</sup> Robinson (1996), p. ii

<sup>26</sup> ISA Consult, European Institute (Sussex University), GJW Europe, Evaluation of the PHARE and TACIS Democracy Programme 1992 – 1997, Draft Final Report, September 1997, pp. 7 - 8

<sup>27</sup> Stephen Golub, "Assessing and Enhancing the Impact of Democratic Development Projects: A Practitioner's Perspective", *Studies in Comparative International Development*, 1993, Vol. 28, No. 1, pp. 54 - 70

<sup>28</sup> Robinson (1996), p. iii

<sup>29</sup> ISA Consult (1997)

<sup>30</sup> Robinson (1996)

<sup>31</sup> Robinson (1996), p. 35

<sup>32</sup> See for partial regimes: Philippe C. Schmitter, "The Consolidation of Political Democracies: Processes, Rhythms, Sequences and Types", now in Geoffrey Pridham (ed.), *Transitions to Democracy: Comparative Perspectives from Southern Europe, Latin America and Eastern Europe*, Dartmouth, The International Library of Politics and Comparative Government, 1995, pp. 535 – 569. See also Schmitter, Guilhot: 1999

Table One

## Democracy Promotion &amp; Protection

		Primary Location of Activity	
		Inside Target Country	Outside Target Country
Nature and Degree of 'Consent' from Target Country	Non-Consensual	Coercion Military Intervention / Occupation	Conditionality Sanctions / Rewards  +
	"Tolerated"		Support for Opposition in Exile & Voice of America Transmissions
	Consensual	'Consent' Electoral, Institution Building, Civil Society Development Assistance Inside Target Country (i.e. Internal Democracy Assistance)	Contagion Training of Judges, Bureaucrats, Politicians, Civil Society Personnel Outside Target Country (i.e. External Democracy Assistance)

Table Two  
Democracy Assistance

		Goal	
		Democracy Promotion	Democracy Protection
		Political Liberalization / Democratization	Consolidation of Democracy
Target Level	Individual Citizens	Civic Education (esp. Electoral)	Civic Education
	Civil Society	PVOs / NGOs / Interest Groups* / Media	PVOs / NGOs / Interest Groups / Media
	Political Society	Political Parties / Interest Groups Acting as Political Organizations / Political Movements	Political Parties
	State	Constitution (Writing / Reform)	Judiciary / Legislature / Police / Military / Decentralization

\* For the distinctions between PVOs, NGOs, and Interest Groups, see text (endnote 16)  
Remarks: (1) Some forms of assistance appear in more than one cell because donors implement them in different transition phases; (2) dark gray cells indicate the most appropriate forms of DPP given the specific transition phase.







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