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# A STUDY OF POLITICAL PARTY ASSISTANCE IN EASTERN EUROPE AND EURASIA

JUNE 2007

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## **DISCLAIMER**

The authors' views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the United States Agency for International Development or the United States Government.



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DI principal Eric Bjornlund, a lawyer and development professional with extensive experience working with and analyzing political parties around the world, supervised the project, participated in team interviews in Serbia, and edited this report and the case studies. DI Program Officer Bill Gallery coordinated and supported the team's field research and helped edit the report and the case studies. DI principal Glenn Cowan, a political party expert with decades of experience in U.S. party politics and international party assistance, also advised the team, conducted interviews in Washington, and reviewed and advised on the project and its findings.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Under a joint project of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and the U.S. State Department (EUR/ACE), Democracy International (DI) conducted a comprehensive study of efforts to assist political party development in Eastern Europe and Eurasia. USAID's Europe and Eurasia Bureau and the State Department commissioned this study as part of an effort to increase the effectiveness and impact of political party development programs in environments constrained by U.S. Government assistance budgets, donor fatigue, and political and structural developments within recipient countries. The purpose of this study is to suggest more effective approaches to political party development based on an examination of constraints and opportunities in the E&E region and current best practices.

Using a comparative research design, Democracy International, USAID and the State Department selected cases to shed light on various approaches to political party assistance (PPA) in different contexts. Before beginning field research, DI prepared an extensive review of both the academic and applied literatures on political party assistance and developed selection criteria for the choice of case studies. Between September and December 2006, DI conducted interviews and focus groups in four case-study countries: Serbia, Romania, Georgia and Kyrgyzstan.

Party assistance strategies can be grouped into three core areas: (1) enhancing the electoral competitiveness of parties, including training in campaign strategy and tactics for parties and candidates, (2) party building, organizational development and internal democracy, and (3) aiding parties in legislatures and governance. The party institutes have conducted election-assistance programs in most countries in Europe and Eurasia, but these programs remain particularly active in Eurasia. Also common throughout the region are party building and organizational development programs, including constituency development, grassroots campaigns, membership expansion, leadership training, policy development, and efforts targeting women, youth and minorities. Legislative programs have been relatively common in targeted countries in Europe but less so in Eurasia; increasing attention to the role of parties in governance would be welcome, particularly at later stages of democratic transitions.

Building on a review of the comparative politics and applied literatures on party assistance, including assessments, evaluations and studies of party assistance of donors and implementers in transition countries, we consider the categories of *structure*, *strategy* and *agency* as ways to conceptualize and identify potential hypotheses for explaining variations in party assistance outcomes.

## STRUCTURE/POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT

Variations in structure or political environment within which party assistance occurs can influence the degree of success of political party assistance strategies. Structural factors such as a country's "neighborhood" or geography, political legacy, degree of economic development and extent of common identity within its domestic population can either impede or support efforts at political party assistance. In this study, we pay particular



attention to the role of the political environment or stage of a democratic transition. However, structure does not automatically determine assistance success or failure.

Despite a shared communist past, Romania, Serbia, Georgia and Kyrgyzstan each face markedly different structural constraints. As such, while political party assistance can play a positive role in each of these countries, the nature of this assistance must vary so as to address the differing environmental challenges each country confronts. For Romania, this may simply mean one last effort at assisting parties in their movement away from a *nomenklatura* to a meritocratic elite. In Serbia, building on an earlier generation of party assistance to the democratic struggle against authoritarianism, assistance strategies might do more to encourage cross-cutting, issue-based party platforms to help diminish the divisive role of ethnic and nationalist politics. In Georgia, assistance strategies must confront an emerging dominant party system in which the governing United National Movement, its democratic ideals notwithstanding, applies its dominance of state resources to the maintenance of uninterrupted rule. And in Kyrgyzstan, party assistance must delicately negotiate between the potential for real political chaos and, at the same time, the opening that political stalemate provides for constitutional reform and for building the institutional foundations for future party democracy. In all four countries, the assistance goal is the same: aiding the creation of democratic political parties capable of aggregating and representing social interests. The strategies for achieving this shared goal must be individualized and tailored to each country's structural constraints.

### **Structural Variations and Assistance Strategies**

Speaking more broadly, we can make recommendations about the types of programs most appropriate or most likely to be successful in different circumstances. The effectiveness of political party assistance can be increased by adjusting development strategies so as to address the varying challenges parties face under differing regime types. In particular, we consider three different types of political environments in which the U.S. government supports political party assistance: (1) semiauthoritarian regimes initiating potentially competitive elections; (2) inchoate democracies attempting postelection consolidation, often after a transitional election has taken place; and (3) young democracies moving toward third and fourth round competitive elections.

In semiauthoritarian settings, we suggest that political party assistance would do well to focus as much if not more on the process of elections as on the platforms and internal development of individual parties contesting elections. In contrast, in environments of post-election consolidation, where prodemocracy coalitions are fragmenting, we find that assistance strategies that target platform articulation and voter outreach are often what inchoate political parties need. Last, in young democracies, that have previously held competitive elections, we find that political entrepreneurs are beginning to understand the value of voter outreach, platform development and other features of advanced parties. In these situations, assistance probably should focus on reforms that parties are less likely to adopt entirely on their own initiative, such as in areas of internal democracy, or, in advanced cases, begin to phase out party assistance altogether.

The preceding discussion is an attempt to move beyond critique and toward providing the beginnings of a tool kit for conceptualizing and addressing the diverse challenges implementers must confront in varying settings. These prescriptions, we should note, emerge from a four-country sample. Importantly, though, these four countries are representative of a broader constellation of regimes in differing stages of political change and, as such, provide what we hope is a sound foundation for the further generation and refinement of party assistance strategies.

### **ISSUES OF STRATEGY FOR PARTY ASSISTANCE**

A number of issues about strategies for political party assistance emerge from the case studies and other research and experience. These issues are discussed in greater detail in the body of the report.

#### **1. Understanding the Real Incentives of Parties and Politicians**

To be effective and sustainable, political party assistance should directly address the incentives of politicians, political parties and others with a stake in reform by helping them to understand how reform can work in their best interests. Programs often must motivate party leaders, government officials and others to change their behavior. But appeals to politicians to do the right thing or to act in the public interest cannot realistically be expected to trump politicians pursuing what they perceive to be their own interests. Fundamentally, assistance should try to create a link in the mind of politicians between the public interest and their own interests, namely, achieving electoral success or political power. Advisors can argue that changes in behavior have major political implications and try to demonstrate how changes can benefit parties, particularly if they are early adopters. A related proposition is that in some contexts, such as in many consolidating or more open democratic systems, those seeking to change the behavior of parties should consider program strategies to alter incentives, such as working with civil society organizations to increase pressure on parties from the “demand side.”

#### **2. Partisanship and the Selection of Partners**

USAID’s *Political Party Assistance Policy* provides that USAID programs “do not seek to determine election outcomes” but also prohibits assistance to “nondemocratic parties.” Even before the adoption of this policy in 2003, USAID and the party institutes declined to work with parties with extremist, violent or other nondemocratic tendencies. While the intent and justification for this policy are clear, it can be difficult to determine where to draw the line. To build parties as organizations and reinforce democratic norms, decision makers should try to construe limits to engagement narrowly; too strict an interpretation can be counterproductive in some environments. Some level of engagement short of actual assistance, even with extreme, nondemocratic parties, might help to expose them to democratic norms and push them to some modicum of reform. It may be possible to engage with parties without providing them direct assistance, such as in local governance programs or in discussions of policy or institutional reforms. Moreover, particularly in post-communist countries, party affiliations and platforms are as much instrumental as they are substantive. Providing or withholding assistance based on party identification

risks alienating seemingly illiberal elites and parties that, provided the right incentives, might actually prove reformist and progressive. And it risks wasting resources on seemingly liberal elites and parties that, under changed conditions, subsequently prove autocratic and retrograde.

### **3. Contesting Elections and Improving Capacity as Competing Party Assistance Goals**

Election assistance should be a means to an end—a method of building popular support, connecting parties to constituents and refining their policy messages, with the ultimate goal of producing a system with internally democratic, representative parties. As noted, USAID policy states that party assistance should be offered equitably and should not seek to influence particular electoral outcomes.

Election assistance can be an important priority in some situations, particularly in semi-authoritarian contexts. However, although an electoral victory over an entrenched authoritarian regime can be a legitimate short-term goal, there is a danger in emphasizing elections as the standard for success in party assistance. While electoral and organizational development goals are not necessarily at odds, USAID's continued focus in some countries on electoral assistance, possibly at the expense of organizational and governance programs, may hamper the further development of democratic parties and the eventual marginalization of nondemocratic ones. There is also a tendency to focus resources on party assistance only around election time, rather than in sustained multi-year efforts that can build parties over the long-term.

If the ultimate goal is the creation of a viable party system with multiple democratically oriented, popularly supported parties, programs that have the appearance of taking sides in elections risk creating a situation in which the goal of electoral victory for one side outweighs the broader goal of providing the electorate with meaningful choice and representation. In general the purpose of election-related party assistance should be to build strong political party organizations, not to help particular parties in particular elections.

### **4. Public Opinion Research**

Public opinion polling in Europe and Eurasia has had many positive effects and has been well received by many parties in the region. Polling provides important input into the development of party platforms and campaign strategy. The attention to polling has helped establish survey research as a democratic norm and has focused attention on the importance of public opinion in a democracy. The institutes have helped parties to interpret and appreciate the value of public opinion research, and even though many academic researchers in the region have had previous experience with conducting and interpreting survey research, the work of the institutes has had the ancillary benefit of enhancing the capacity of local research organizations and firms to conduct and analyze opinion surveys.

At the same time, there are several potential concerns with this focus on survey research. First, there is some debate about whether and when the results of survey research should

be publicly released and the extent to which the larger public can understand the nuances of survey results. In some instances, the party institutes prefer to share polling results only with particular parties, but parties or funders may want to share findings more widely. Although understanding of polling is improving, the media, political parties and the public may not always have the knowledge, experience and sophistication necessary to interpret it; this does not necessarily argue against survey research, but it does raise questions about the danger that polls may be misinterpreted or misused. Second, despite the common view that party programs need to pay greater attention to issues of governance, emphasis on survey research can reinforce the tendency for such programs to focus on elections, even when such research is conducted in nonelection years. This is true despite the significant efforts of USAID and implementers to focus polls on issues and deemphasize questions about voter attitudes toward particular parties, candidates and public officials. Third, it is important that survey research sponsored in the context of party assistance programs serves a development purpose rather than being weighed down by attempts to obtain information for the use of foreign organizations and governments for other analytical and foreign-policy purposes.

Ultimately, survey research can contribute to party development and to the electoral performance of democratic parties. But party assistance providers should be judicious about the use of public opinion polling and should keep in mind the goal of party (and democratic) development. The main objectives should be the transfer of skills and norms, such as convincing party clients of the value of listening to the views of their supporters and the larger public and testing whether party messages are getting through to the public. Most important, providers should continue to ensure the impartiality, integrity and technical competence of the local organizations and foreign consultants conducting and interpreting such research.

### **5. Working in the Center versus the Regions**

Although well-designed party programs can create a constituency for reform at the national level, training party activists in the center does not necessarily trickle down to their counterparts at the local level. As USAID and implementers understand, a considerably more sustained presence in the regions is essential if democracy assistance is to succeed in helping parties build grassroots constituencies outside the capital. This is particularly true in countries where the political elite is highly concentrated but population is more broadly dispersed or where communication between the center and the regions is poor.

### **6. Integrating Women and Youth into Political Party Assistance Strategies**

Women, and issues of particular concern to women, are underrepresented in political parties and government institutions in most if not all of the countries receiving political party assistance in Europe and Eurasia. Minorities confront similar barriers to effective participation. In addition, many believe that involving and building the capacity of young party leaders is a way to increase the orientation of parties toward reform. But, while gender and youth initiatives in party assistance are normatively laudable, they seem unlikely to succeed, at least initially, in many political environments unless parties see such initiatives as being in their own self-interest. Most parties will not focus on includ-

ing women candidates and appealing to women's interests unless they think they gain some advantage from doing so. In the meantime, such programs run the risk of diverting attention from the more fundamental needs of building ideologically coherent, organizationally capable political parties. Given sufficient resources, an emphasis on youth and gender inclusiveness concomitant with a focus on fundamentals of party capacity building and strengthening probably can contribute to broadened political representation of important constituencies in the long run, especially if parties start to recognize the potential electoral benefits of reaching out to these constituencies. But in the near term, women and youth are often perceived to be at the margins of what is really important to many parties and their leaders, and without an attempt to change that perception a focus on such efforts risks making party programs marginal as well.

## **7. Civil Society Assistance and Party Assistance**

To encourage mutually reinforcing cooperation between political parties and civil society organizations (CSOs), a consciously integrated civil society-party assistance strategy could encourage CSOs to: (1) monitor manipulation of and corruption within political parties, (2) provide leadership, organizational and analytical skills for party activists, (3) help aggregate and represent grassroots demands for reform, and (4) provide policy-issue expertise.

At the same time, the civil society-political party relationship can accelerate rather than dampen divisive ideologies and hamper democratic reforms, through (1) aggregation and representation of illiberal interests and (2) politicization of what should be nonpartisan efforts, such as domestic election monitoring. The reformist potential of civil society-political party relations rests on a paradox: if civil society is to protect against illiberal politics and to promote competitive, multiparty democracy, civic organizations must themselves remain nonpoliticized. Multiparty democracy benefits from organizations that can serve as watchdogs against corruption, represent and articulate social interests, and improve the capacity of parties by making available qualified experts. To achieve this productive and liberalizing relationship, however, party assistance strategies must not only work with civic organizations, they must actively assist civic organizations capable of acting as honest brokers in struggles against the incompetence, corruption and abuses of power that so often define transitional political systems.

## **8. Party System Aid**

At times, assistance providers work to improve party systems, for example by attempting to reform the legal framework for parties, elections and political finance. Much of this assistance is provided to election management bodies, government authorities, legislatures and nongovernmental organizations rather than directly to parties. Parties, however, can play important, even vital, roles in bringing about institutional reform, for their interests will be directly affected. Assistance providers can work with parties to help them identify their interests and build political support for needed reforms.

## **AGENCY/IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES**

Issues of agency and implementation also emerge from the case studies.

### **1. Program Management and Competing Institutional Interests**

The quality of working relationships among the embassy, USAID mission, party institutes and other donors can affect the quality of party assistance outcomes. These actors sometimes have competing institutional interests. Within the U.S. government and between the U.S. government and the party institutes, differences of perspective and opinion can cause tensions that can potentially detract from the effectiveness of assistance programs.

The party institutes should be encouraged to put more emphasis on monitoring and evaluation of their own work or to allow it from outside sources. Further broad study of party assistance and other political development program impacts and challenges should be encouraged.

In some countries USAID and the party institutes sometimes disagree on priorities, budgets, strategies and tactics, although in other countries there is clear and lasting consensus. These disagreements stem from institutional causes as well as from the complex nature of political party development and potential tensions between democratization and other foreign policy interests. There are also differences of opinion between and within agencies of the U.S. government about the relative importance of political party assistance. Greater involvement of the State Department in foreign assistance carries implications not only for broad policy goals, but also for strategic and tactical decisions. There are possible differences between short-term diplomatic goals and longer-term development goals that can affect assistance programs. In such areas, USAID's institutional knowledge and experience should be key resources in making decisions, whatever form the process takes.

### **2. Program Scope and Competition**

The party institutes work in other areas in addition to political party assistance. Accordingly, party assistance programs are not always clearly separated from civil society, civic education, monitoring, legislative, and other democracy and governance programs.

Within the political party assistance field, as traditionally defined, both institutes often conduct a full range of programs in most countries, including work in each of the three broad categories of party assistance programs: (1) elections, (2) organizational capacity-building, and (3) and governance. Although there are some important differences in emphasis and style between the institutes, their approaches and program tactics are largely similar. The institutes work in most of the same countries in the region, including most of the countries that have U.S. assistance programs, and their programs often appear overlapping, although they report that they have generally agreed on a discernible division of labor and a solid reinforcement of each other's work.



There are other sources of assistance to parties in the region. First, European party foundations operate in many countries in the region, though most of them have emerged only in very recent years and operate with tiny budgets, and even the older, well-funded German party foundations during the 1990s moved largely away from party work (in favor of work with civil society organizations, think-tanks, academic institutions and civic education efforts) in much of the world. Second, nondemocratic and nationalist parties in several countries are receiving outside assistance from other governments, albeit without the transparency necessary for the public or the international community to assess the nature of such relationships.

Third, parties in the region, including democratic parties, are increasingly receiving assistance from paid political consultants, even where political party aid is available for free. Such private consulting is offered for a more narrow purpose and is more oriented to election tactics and other short-term considerations than is U.S. government-funded party assistance, which is more focused on longer-term party-building. Once parties can afford to hire outside political consultants, however, the U.S. government should consider whether to continue to provide them assistance, although by itself the use of consultants would not be determinative. At the very least, competition, even from European and private sources, will require USAID and the party institutes to be more creative and to adapt their programs if parties are still going to seek their assistance. But this must be done without bowing to the temptation to serve as *de facto* political consultants on election strategies.

### **3. Establishing Democratic Norms, Building Relationships and Representing the U.S.**

Political party assistance is often criticized, and party assistance programs certainly have weaknesses that can and should be addressed. But such criticisms often overlook the less tangible, more fundamental benefits of party assistance: the opportunity to build relationships with local parties and political elites that can reinforce important democratic norms. Even if structural constraints are difficult to overcome, or if resources are not sufficient to initiate a sweeping democratic transition, assistance to political parties can encourage the socialization of democratic norms and the acceptance of basic democratic values. Furthermore, maintaining a presence in a country allows assistance providers to seize unexpected opportunities for democratic reform when they present themselves.

The suggestion that political party assistance can make lasting, positive contributions merely by the presence of providers is not to excuse ineffective programs or to obviate the need for rigorous critiques of current programs and efforts to improve on current weaknesses. Rather, it argues for maintaining assistance to parties even in the face of daunting structural constraints.

### **CASE STUDY SUMMARIES**

Based on its field visits and background research, DI's team produced case study reports for each of the four countries examined in this study. They are included as Appendices. The following brief summaries highlight a few of the major points from each case study.

### Georgia

The Georgia case illustrates well the constructive role political party assistance can have in the run up to competitive elections and the critical need for continued party assistance during periods of postelectoral consolidation. Since the 2003 Rose Revolution and Eduard Shevardnadze's peaceful departure from power, USAID has continued to work closely with political office holders and, as a result, continues to provide valued assistance to Georgia's democratically oriented ruling United National Movement (UNM). Smaller parties that were formerly allied with the UNM, however, have become dissatisfied with the level of consolidation around the ruling party and with its control over all levels and branches of government. The resulting increase in the number of parties with little government representation suggests that future USAID political party assistance strategy might consider supplementing ongoing parliament and executive-oriented programs with new programming that deepens assistance to the struggling and poorly organized political opposition. The central challenge for USAID party assistance in Georgia today is translating the success the party institutes had working with the united 2003 pro-democracy coalition to engaging many competing yet still pro-democracy oriented political parties. USAID officials, along with their party institute counterparts, well understand this changed reality and have indicated that future party assistance strategies will consolidate the successes of the current parliamentary program while, at the same time, deepening assistance to parties without parliamentary representation.

### Kyrgyzstan

The Kyrgyz case demonstrates that, even in challenging environments, party assistance can encourage semiauthoritarian states toward increased political pluralism. At the same time, it illustrates that hard won political openings may be followed by authoritarian backsliding rather than by the consolidation of competitive politics. The advance of political pluralism and democratically oriented parties is not a linear process and the achievement of downstream political party assistance objectives—such as better center-region relations among party branches and greater voter outreach—is dependent on the prior achievement of an improved political environment within which political parties can operate. Accordingly, in Kyrgyzstan the party institutes concentrated much of their efforts, particularly following the executive leadership change in March 2005, on assisting attempts to improve the political environment so as to help institutionalize norms of political pluralism and competitive elections. At the time of this writing, the constitutional reform process in Kyrgyzstan is ongoing and tenuous. Nevertheless, assistance in this continuing process has proven helpful in encouraging a more deliberative and open environment for constitutional reform, something which is critical if, in turn, Kyrgyzstan's constitution is to guarantee a deliberative and open environment for political contestation.

The analysis of political party assistance in Kyrgyzstan generates several hypotheses for further study beyond the Kyrgyz case. First, at the institutional level, this analysis demonstrates that attention and assistance to reforming formal institutions and constitutional design can lay the foundations for future political party growth. Second, field research in the regions suggests that, while well-designed party programs can create a constituency



for reform in the capital, a considerably more sustained presence in the regions is essential if democracy assistance is to succeed in building grassroots constituencies for political parties outside the capital. Third, for youth- and women-focused assistance programs to succeed, party assistance must encourage not only youth and women wings within political parties but also must work to change incentive structures that as of now hold few rewards for more inclusive voter outreach.

## **Romania**

Romania's ongoing post-1989 transition to democracy and its accession to full EU membership in January 2007 provide the larger context for political party assistance there. Overall, Romania is in the process of a relatively successful democratic transition, aided substantially by the United States, though USAID and the party institutes are now completing their work there. In joining the EU, Romania would seem to have embarked on a new stage of this transition, but the country has much more to do to consolidate its democracy in the new European context.

USAID and the party institutes have supported relatively modest party assistance efforts during three phases of DG assistance: (1) early support for national-level reforms including limited party assistance; (2) a subsequent emphasis on local democratic development, including support by the party institutes for local political parties; and (3) a final "pre-graduation" effort to transfer local progress to national institutions. Parties, however, continue to face challenges of transition and consolidation. On the one hand, there seems to be a long-term movement towards a system with two dominant parties, further contributing to stability and to a basis for further advances. On the other hand, parties have continuing needs for development of their basic capacities to address public needs rather than private interests, to participate in the formulation of public policy through expertise, to advance internal party democracy, and to combat party corruption, which continues at an alarming level.

Modest USAID investments in PPA, along with the incentives generated by Romania's joining the EU, have helped to deepen and institutionalize political party development. Many observers claim, however, that party assistance strategies have not kept pace with changing circumstances. Parties now feel competent to conduct their own training of party activists and parliamentary staff members. Some suggest that while there is still a need for outside training expertise at the local level, it needs to be more targeted and specialized. For party assistance in Romania to be effective going forward, it would require a deeper understanding of the needs and incentives of political parties than now exists. In any event, going forward, political parties and others in Romania seem to agree that party development driven by domestic NGOs and parties themselves is the best approach.

## **Serbia**

In Serbia, major investments in the democratic transition, including political party assistance, laid the groundwork for relatively effective long-term assistance to political party development. Early support for regime change gave way to expanded support for the political transition from within the country, which continues as support for the still incom-

plete consolidation of the democratic system. Serbia's political environment presents considerable challenges for democratic development in general and for political parties in particular, ranking somewhere between the more hospitable environments of Central and Eastern Europe and the more hostile environments of Eurasia. In the face of this, political parties in Serbia have developed substantially in recent years and well-resourced political party assistance has contributed to that change.

Democratic political parties in Serbia have made institutional progress since overthrowing Milosevic and initiating a political transition, but the movement of party leaders into government has weakened party leadership and structures. The resulting "governance gap" has hampered intra-party democracy and has hurt the capacity of political parties outside government. Unresolved political issues with roots in the Milosevic era, such as the status of Kosovo, have also hindered prospects for political reform. Weak leadership has plagued the political process, and democratic political parties have failed to form effective coalitions or approaches to reform. Unrealized expectations have led to substantial public disillusionment, and voter apathy, combined with long-established regional patterns of ethnic divisions, has strengthened the hand of nationalist parties.

Party assistance has focused considerable attention on election-related assistance, and USAID and the U.S. embassy have continued to encourage this approach. In part, this is because of the particular nature of Serbia's democratic transition, which has compelled a focus on democratic parties' election readiness, both under Milosevic and afterward. This has led to considerable improvements in party organization and party campaigning. By consensus, however, PPA efforts in the area of governance have been more limited.

Still, political party programming in Serbia has been evolving from electoral politics toward legislative politics and good governance. Moving beyond Kosovo, the International Criminal Tribunal and other such issues and dismantling the still powerful vestiges of the Milosevic regime will afford the opportunity to tackle many of the critical governance issues that remain. As part of a new emphasis on parties in governance, party assistance programs should consider new initiatives such as supporting policy expertise in parties and parliament to help the Serbian policy environment mature away from nationalist symbolic issues toward addressing more concrete issues that affect quality of life.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Under a joint project of the Europe and Eurasia Bureau of the U.S. Agency for International Development and the U.S. State Department Office of the Coordinator of U.S. Assistance to Europe and Eurasia (EUR/ACE), Democracy International conducted a comprehensive study of programs to assist political party development in the region. USAID and the U.S. State Department commissioned this study to advance understanding and application of political party assistance within the broader context of U.S. foreign assistance and foreign policy objectives for promoting democratic development.

The purpose of the project is to review existing party assistance strategies and tactics and, where possible, to suggest more effective approaches to political party development. Accordingly, this report examines constraints in Europe and Eurasia and offers suggestions about program, policy or diplomatic responses to those constraints, identifies program opportunities, ascertains best practices in different situations, and suggests criteria for decisions about political party development programs.

## METHODOLOGY

Democracy International conducted this study in three phases. First, before beginning field research, DI prepared an extensive review of both the academic and applied literatures on political party assistance. Second, DI developed selection criteria for the choice of case studies. Finally, between September and December 2006, DI conducted interviews and focus groups in four case-study countries.

### **Phase 1: Literature Review and Desk Study**

In Phase 1, in August 2006, DI reviewed the recent political party literature and conducted a desk assessment of USAID-funded and other party assistance programs. This literature review and desk assessment was intended to enable the team to better understand the role of political party programming within the larger context of democracy assistance and democratization, to appreciate of the range of past programming approaches, and to begin to identify best practices.

The literature review includes investigations of (a) the comparative politics literature on the roles of political parties in the democratization process; (b) the academic literature on political party assistance; and (c) the practice-based or informal literature on political party assistance, including assessments and studies commissioned or conducted by USAID, USAID party assistance implementers and other donors. DI also interviewed representatives of IRI and NDI in Washington about their approaches to political party development and their programs in Europe and Eurasia. At IRI we met with Lorne Craner, President; Lindsay Lloyd, Regional Director for Europe; and Steve Nix, Regional Director for Eurasia. At NDI we met, among others, with Ken Wollack, President; Ivan Doherty, Director for Political Parties Programs; Robert Benjamin, Regional Director for Central and Eastern Europe; Nelson Ledsky, Regional Director for Eurasia; Catherine Pajic, Deputy Regional Director for Central and Eastern Europe; and Tom Barry, Deputy Regional Director for Eurasia. We also met with representatives of IFES, including

President Richard Soudriette, Executive Vice President Jim Vermillion, and Michael Svetlik, Regional Director for Europe and Eurasia.

Democracy International also developed, and NDI completed, a comprehensive matrix detailing components of party assistance programs in Europe and Eurasia. (See Appendix E.) The matrix summarizes current and past programs in 26 countries in Central and Eastern Europe and Eurasia. Specifically, the matrix provides information for each country in four broad areas: (1) Program Subjects, (2) Tactics and Targeting, (3) Resources and (4) Political Environment. Information on Program Subjects is divided into five categories:

- (a) Elections,
- (b) Money Politics,
- (c) Advocacy/Issue Politics,
- (d) Party Building, Organizational Development and Internal Democracy, and
- (e) Legislative Programs.

Tactics and Targeting includes information on

- (a) Research
- (b) Training,
- (c) Partners/Targets,
- (d) Basis for Party Selection,
- (e) National and/or Local Focus,
- (f) Targets within Parties, and
- (g) Non-Training Assistance.

This matrix helped DI to understand the scope of existing political party assistance programs in Europe and Eurasia.

### **Phase 2: Selection of Case Studies**

Drawing on findings from the literature review and desk study, the study team worked with USAID and EUR/ACE in Phase 2, during August and early September 2006, to develop criteria for selecting four case-study countries.

According to our comparative research design, we selected cases in a way that would allow us to draw inferences about the causes of variations in the effectiveness of political party assistance. We endeavored to have sufficient variation to allow inferences from different cases. We wanted to select four cases that contained enough differentiation in political context and party assistance approaches to enable reasonable comparisons and broader lessons for other situations throughout Europe and Eurasia.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Political scientists often use the case-study method to draw broader conclusions. In an important article in the *American Political Science Review*, John Gerring defines the case-study method as “an intensive study of a single unit with an aim to generalize across a larger set of units” and explains the utility, and limitations, of this approach. John Gerring, “What Is a Case Study and What Is It Good for?” *American*

We understand that both party assistance programs and the environment in which these programs are conducted vary. Nevertheless, we endeavored to design a study that would allow for structured comparison and, most important, generalizable findings about political party assistance.

We identified four principal criteria to guide case-study selection. First, to ensure as broad a comparison as possible, we chose countries where both party institutes are present. Second, so as to capture important environmental and structural variations, we chose countries with varying degrees of political openness, as judged by Freedom House and Transparency International ratings as well as DI's assessment of the success or failure of a transition and the party institutes' view of political space in a country.<sup>2</sup>

Third, we considered the type of political party assistance. For types of programs implemented, we employed a typology that covered the range of party assistance programs. We considered in particular whether political party assistance programs were aimed at a single party or coalition or whether they worked with all viable parties. Fourth, we sought a geographic spread, between Europe and Eurasia and within each of those subregions.

As secondary considerations, we sought countries with differing historical legacies, specifically some with prior experience with democracy and membership in the Soviet Union and others from the broader Soviet Bloc. We also wanted to choose one or more countries where there have been clear-cut phases, to enable longitudinal analysis of situations and/or approaches. In addition, we took account of the extent of success achieved in assistance programs by talking to USAID, the party institutes and others familiar with the programs, although ultimately we did not attempt to control for this variable, in part because of the difficulty of getting consensus on which cases had been less successful.

DI met with a Working Group from USAID/EE and the State Department on August 23, 2006, to discuss the process and criteria for the selection of case studies. After further consultations by the CTO within the Agency and with the State Department, USAID and DI agreed on the selection of four countries, two from Europe and two from Eurasia: Serbia, Romania, Georgia and Kyrgyzstan.

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Political Science Review 98 (2004), p. 341. Writing in *World Politics*, David Collier and James Mahoney explain the value of the case study method and qualitative research, although they recommend that "scholars in the field of international and comparative studies should heed the admonition to be more self-conscious about the selection of cases and the frame of comparison most appropriate to addressing their research questions." David Collier and James Mahoney, "Insights and Pitfalls: Selection Bias in Qualitative Research," *World Politics* 49:1 (1996), p. 59.

<sup>2</sup> Robert Dahl's *Polyarchy* is often the baseline for discussions of regime type. Dahl uses two measures: degree of political competition and degree of social participation. Dahl's conceptualization is helpful in that it explicitly considers both the state and (civil) society, rather than just the state. Robert Dahl, *Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition* (Yale University Press, 1972), p. 7.

### **Phase 3. Field research**

The principal investigators conducted field work in the four countries between September and December 2006. The team traveled to Serbia in September, to Romania in October, and to Georgia and Kyrgyzstan in December. In each country, the team met with representatives of USAID, implementers of political party programs, government representatives, political party leaders and activists, elected members of parliament, journalists and academic observers, and other relevant stakeholders. The team also traveled to one or more locations outside the capital in each country to conduct in-depth interviews with local political party and government officials and other stakeholders and informed observers in the field.

To facilitate cross-country comparison, DI developed an interview protocol to structure the team's interviews. The team met with 50 to 75 individuals in each country and convened mid-size group discussions whenever possible, particularly with party leaders, members of youth and women's party groups, journalists, civil society activists and foreign donors. These interviews provide critical data for drawing causal explanations of variations in the degree of success of political party assistance.

### **Preparation of Report**

Throughout the process, DI and the team have consulted regularly with USAID in Washington and in the case-study countries and met with a Working Group of USAID and State Department staff members to address substantive questions and receive comments and feedback.

Based on this field work, the team prepared detailed case narratives for each country. (See Appendices A through D). In response to comments from the advisory committee and new materials, DI also revised and updated the literature review, which is included as Section II of this report. Finally, DI has taken the lessons learned from the case studies and literature review and prepared a comprehensive set of findings and recommendations.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The following literature review is edited and adapted from the draft literature review and desk study submitted in Phase 1 of the project. The first section is divided into two parts that review the comparative politics or academic literature on political parties and political party assistance, respectively. The second section addresses the applied or informal literature of unpublished studies commissioned or conducted by donors and PPA implementers on political party assistance.

### COMPARATIVE POLITICS LITERATURE REVIEW

#### Introduction

This section reviews the existing academic literature on (1) political parties and (2) political party assistance. First, we briefly review the role parties play in democratizing and liberalizing polities and then turn to more contested question of party formation. Second, we look at the limited academic literature touching on political party assistance. Our discussion of the comparative politics literature demonstrates that, while scholars are quick to stress the importance of parties to the overall welfare of democratic and democratizing countries, few researchers offer comprehensive explanations of how parties form and even fewer provide insights into how outside actors and policy makers might assist the process of party formation. The literature does identify, however, three variables that influence patterns of party formation: (1) structure (often referred to as “environment” in discussions of political development), (2) actor agency, and (3) assistance strategies. These variables can accelerate, impede and redirect the pace and nature of party formation and institutionalization. The goal of our study is to move forward from the identification of these variables to a discussion of how these variables shape party formation in Eastern Europe and Eurasia, and of how party assistance can be structured to positively affect them.

#### 1. The Importance of Parties

Genuine democracy requires competitive political parties. Parties find candidates, organize political competition and seek to win elections. In opposition, they maintain pressure on incumbents to respond to public concerns. Parties also articulate positions on, and stimulate debate about, issues of public concern. They aggregate and represent local concerns and other narrow interests in the political system, which provides a structure for political participation. Political systems without free political parties can hardly be considered democratic.

Unfortunately, in Southeastern Europe and Eurasia, as elsewhere, political parties are widely held in disrepute. Citizens often view parties as ineffective, corrupt and out of touch. Not infrequently, in struggling democracies, political parties are among the most undemocratic institutions. Often they become captive of strong, even autocratic personalities or function as tools of entrenched special interests. Only occasionally do parties represent the views of broad-based constituencies. Sometimes in societies in transition, the same parties that help foster change subsequently become obstacles to representative government and further reform themselves. Thomas Carothers summarizes the “standard



lament” about political parties in new democracies around the world as “usually top-down, leader-centric, organizationally thin, corrupt, patrimonial, and ideologically vague.”<sup>3</sup> This lament applies to many if not most political parties in the emerging democracies and semiauthoritarian societies of Europe and Eurasia.

Parties are critical to democracies and democratic reform in that they (1) enable citizens to hold leaders accountable, (2) enable the electorate to choose among multiple policy and leadership alternatives, (3) institutionalize competition, (4) aggregate interests, (5) mobilize and socialize voters, and (6) make governments more efficient.<sup>4</sup> Despite the widely recognized value of parties, though, the actual process of party formation remains poorly understood. The literature on Western democracies, as Marcus Kreuzer and Vello Pettai note in a recent survey, typically assumes the presence of well-functioning and stable political parties.<sup>5</sup> Yet, as Conor O’Dwyer finds in post-communist Eastern Europe, party systems cannot simply be assumed. Rather, parties, if they exist at all, are often “highly fragmented and volatile.”<sup>6</sup> As O’Dwyer notes, and as other recent analyses of post-communist polities similarly illustrate, however, the degree of party fragmentation and volatility varies. Indeed, as our own study suggests, a wide distance exists between the institutionalization of competitive, albeit volatile, political party systems in Romania and Serbia, the emergence of a dominant single party in Georgia and the near absence of political parties in Kyrgyzstan. These variations in party systems, in turn, have profound implications on state-society relations.

***Volatile Multiparty Systems.*** Volatile party systems like that in Romania, though preferable to dominant party systems or no-party systems, suffer from decreased leadership accountability and waning voter interest articulation. In their study of Polish elections from 1991-2001, for example, Zielinski, Slomczynski and Shabad find that members of parliament were often able to “escape accountability by switching from a governing to a nongoverning party.”<sup>7</sup> Similarly, in Brazil, Scott Mainwaring notes that “503 deputies changed parties 260 times.”<sup>8</sup> Because MPs in such volatile party systems face few penalties should they change party affiliation, they have little incentive to contribute to their current party’s success. Parties, in short, become vehicles for election, not organizations for voter interest aggregation and articulation.

***Dominant Party Systems.*** Dominant single party systems as in Georgia where the United National Movement (UNM) controls the government pose similar challenges to accountability and interest aggregation. Moreover, by their very nature, dominant party systems impede competition. Dominant parties, particularly dominant parties in developing

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<sup>3</sup> Thomas Carothers, *Confronting the Weakest Link: Aiding Political Parties in New Democracies* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2006), p. 66.

<sup>4</sup> Marcus Kreuzer and Vello Pettai, “Political Parties and the Study of Political Development: New Insights from Postcommunist Democracies,” *World Politics* 56 (July 2004), p. 623; USAID Office of Democracy and Governance, “USAID Political Party Development Assistance,” April 1999, pp. 7-8.

<sup>5</sup> Kreuzer and Pettai, p. 623.

<sup>6</sup> Conor O’Dwyer, “Runaway State Building: How Political Parties Shape States in Postcommunist Eastern Europe,” *World Politics* 56 (July 2004), p. 522.

<sup>7</sup> Jakub Zielinski, Kazimierz M. Slomczynski, and Goldie Shabad, “Electoral Control in New Democracies: The Perverse Incentives of Fluid Party Systems,” *World Politics* 57:3 (April 2005), p. 392.

<sup>8</sup> Scott Mainwaring, “Party Systems in the Third Wave,” *Journal of Democracy* 9:3 (1998), p. 79.



economies, typically maintain power through some mixture of patronage, intimidation, vote manipulation, and utopian or chauvinistic ideology. Communist Russia under Stalin exhibited all of these characteristics. The Kuomintang in Taiwan succeeded in maintaining its dominant status by playing up the chauvinism of mainland Chinese against native Taiwanese.<sup>9</sup> And the Institutional Revolutionary Party secured its long hold on Mexican politics through rampant electoral manipulation.<sup>10</sup> Ultimately, all of these party systems proved vulnerable to change over time. Measured in generational rather than regular electoral cycles, though, for many this change did not come fast enough.

**No Party Systems.** Finally, party systems, rather than being competitive and tumultuous or dominant and stagnant, may simply not exist at all. This is the current reality in much of Central Asia where ruling autocrats promote their own patron-client relationships and actively prevent the rise of alternative power centers, be they parties, civic organizations, or regional and clan-based networks. Paradoxically, these “non-systems,” while they may secure an autocrat’s short-run power, fail to secure the long-run interests of either the ruler or of society. As scholars like Joel Migdal and Samuel Huntington explain, autocrats who rely on individualized patronage networks and who cannot mobilize broad public support are forever vulnerable to growing and unmet public demands for political participation.<sup>11</sup>

In short, then, there is a consensus in the comparative politics literature that political parties are critical to democratization, government legitimacy and, ultimately, state stability. Parties link society to government. They aggregate and give voice to social interests. They serve as transmission belts through which citizens can press governments to further collective interests. Indeed, as Samuel Huntington presciently warned in the 1960s and as scholars and practitioners would do well to heed today, parties, not elections, are key to political reform; “elections without parties” merely “reproduce the status quo.”<sup>12</sup>

## 2. Political Party Assistance

There is no extensive literature addressing how international actors might assist the growth and development of democratically oriented parties in authoritarian and semiauthoritarian political settings. Indeed, as Sarah Mendelson notes of democracy assistance and as this study finds of political party assistance in particular, the causal impact of foreign aid is surprisingly understudied in the comparative politics literature.<sup>13</sup> In fact, in the past decade virtually no articles in *The Journal of Democracy*, a premier source on democratization and democracy assistance, have specifically addressed political party assistance to any significant extent. Those that have, have done so only in a superficial

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<sup>9</sup> Hahn Chaibong, “The Ironies of Confucianism,” *Journal of Democracy*, 15:3 (2004), pp. 93-107.

<sup>10</sup> Dorothy J. Solinger, “Ending One-Party Dominance: Korea, Taiwan, Mexico,” *Journal of Democracy*, 12:1 (2001), pp. 30-42.

<sup>11</sup> Joel S. Migdal, *Strong Societies and Weak States: State-Society Relations and State Capabilities in the Third World* (Princeton, 1988), p. 207; Samuel Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies* (Yale University Press, 1968), p. 398.

<sup>12</sup> Samuel Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies* (Yale: New Haven, 1968), p. 402.

<sup>13</sup> Sarah E. Mendelson, “Democracy Assistance and Political Transition in Russia: Between Success and Failure,” *International Security* 25:4 (Spring 2001), p. 68.

fashion, addressing the importance of political parties and the need to support their development as a prerequisite for democratic development.

Other scholarly research concentrates almost exclusively on single countries. As such, the current literature offers few generalized findings. These studies do suggest, though they do not systematically test, potential hypotheses on political party assistance.

In this section we review the limited case-study literature on political party assistance. Our goal, more than simply providing an overview of this new literature, was to identify potential hypotheses and causal variables of party assistance success and failure that we would subsequently test in our four-country comparative analysis.

In short, while scholars, like policy practitioners, agree that party assistance *can* encourage party development and social mobilization, there exist few comparative analyses that establish that party assistance *does* aid party development and social mobilization.

Thomas Carothers, however, does assess the nature and effectiveness of political party assistance in his recent book, *Confronting the Weakest Link: Aiding Political Parties in New Democracies*. Unlike previous studies of democracy assistance, this book includes extensive consideration of European and multilateral organizations and programs, but it draws its analysis largely from the experience of the two principal American providers of political party assistance: NDI and IRI. Carothers has ably synthesized and persuasively critiqued the conventional wisdom about party assistance.

In an echo of his earlier works, Carothers concludes that most democracy promotion efforts “do not produce transformative or catalytic effects on the political life of other societies.”<sup>14</sup> Specifically, party aid “is unlikely . . . to produce decisive changes in the basic organization and operation of parties.”<sup>15</sup> Party aid “rarely has transformative impact” for two basic reasons: “the difficulty of the task and the inadequacies of much of the assistance.”<sup>16</sup> At the same time, Carothers concludes that it is not “a futile enterprise. It sometimes has modest but real positive effects. When aid providers take seriously the challenge of improving their work, as some are doing, it can make a contribution to party development, both regarding the capacity of parties to campaign and their overall organizational strength.”<sup>17</sup>

Regarding the difficulty of the task, Carothers fully acknowledges how hard it can be for outside interventions to affect something as fundamental as the development of political parties in another country. This is principally because of structural constraints, as discussed below. But, more important, he finds considerable inadequacies with the strategy and implementation of political party assistance programs. As we discuss, we find many of the same inadequacies.

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<sup>14</sup> Carothers, *Weakest Link*, p. 61.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 218.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 162.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

Scholars posit three broad variables as possible explanations for the success or failure of party assistance programs: *structure*, *strategy* and *agency*. *Structural* variables include environmental constraints such as geography, levels of economic development, political culture and ethnic diversity. *Strategy* variables refer to the actual design of assistance programs, such as whether they emphasize technical assistance or provide small grants or whether the programs are partisan, engaging only like-minded parties, or multipartisan, engaging all parties regardless of ideological orientation. *Agency* variables refer to the actors themselves, both national leaders and international actors. We consider each of these variables in turn.

### ***Structural Variables***

Structural constraints may impede the success of even the most expertly designed party assistance programs. Polities shaped by civil wars, deep poverty, hierarchical authority and “bad neighbors,” for example, all provide poor soil for effective, mature political parties to take root. Thus, for example, Chip Gagnon wrote in 1998 that we should not be surprised by what he saw at the time as the lack of success for party assistance in Serbia given that country’s “Pandora’s Box of repressed hatreds.”<sup>18</sup> Gagnon’s conclusion finds parallels in the broader comparative politics literature on political reform and democratization. Donald Horowitz, for example, notes that democracy is unlikely to take hold in countries with deep ethnic divides while Dankwart Rustow finds democratization unlikely in polities with opposing or nonexistent perceptions of national identity.<sup>19</sup>

Geography, or a country’s international neighborhood, similarly shapes prospects for party assistance. Proximity to wealthy democracies, what Jeffrey Kopstein and David Reilly bluntly state as “distance from the West,” shapes the perceived calculus of reform.<sup>20</sup> The prospect of European Union membership, for example, likely encouraged elite inclinations to reform in Central European and Baltic countries. Conversely, the growing influence of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and its sponsor states, Russia and China, may prove as a brake to elite-led reform in Central Asia.

Likewise, party assistance faces greater challenges in hierarchical cultures than in polities where values of individualism and equality are more pronounced. Carothers, for example, finds that a cultural malaise in societies long shaped by authoritarian rule, a “pro-

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<sup>18</sup> Chip Gagnon, “International Non-Governmental Organizations and ‘Democracy-Assistance’ in Serbia,” *Carnegie Project on ‘Evaluating NGO Strategies for Democratization and Conflict Prevention in Formerly Communist States*, (December 1998), available online:

<http://www.ithaca.edu/gagnon/articles/carnegie/serbia.htm>. Gagnon’s conclusion, of course, has no relevance to an assessment of the relative success of party assistance in the decade since he wrote. We cite it here as an example of the kinds of structural constraints faced by party assistance programs, in Serbia and elsewhere.

<sup>19</sup> See Donald Horowitz, “Democracy in Divided Societies,” *Journal of Democracy* 4:4 (1993), p. 18 and Dankwart Rustow, “Transitions to Democracy: Toward a Dynamic Model,” *Comparative Politics* 2:3 (April 1970), pp. 337-363.

<sup>20</sup> Jeffrey S. Kopstein and David A. Reilly, “Geographic Diffusion and the Transformation of the Post-communist World,” *World Politics* 53:1 (October 2000), p. 7.

found disaffection from politics,” often hinders party assistance efforts.<sup>21</sup> Carothers’s conclusion echoes the findings of culture-oriented social scientists as diverse as Max Weber, Ronald Inglehart and Samuel Huntington, all scholars who see culture as defining prospects for democracy and political reform.<sup>22</sup>

Importantly, particularly for the purposes of this study, structural constraints need not be determinative of outcomes. Belarus remains authoritarian despite its proximity to the European Union. In Mongolia, in contrast, party politics has flourished notwithstanding a regional environment that provides few incentives for political reform and a political culture that, until recently, had little experience with deliberative democracy. These exceptions suggest that, despite structural constraints, considerable latitude exists for foreign actors to support party development. Key to the success of party assistance efforts, the following two sections demonstrate, are the strategies donor agencies and implementers pursue and the agency of domestic actors themselves, including the agency of domestic elites either to encourage or block reform.

### *Strategy Variables*

A few analysts have devoted considerable effort to uncovering the shortcomings of political party assistance strategies. While these critiques, which are briefly reviewed here, are generally helpful, investigations into PPA strategies that are effective are equally important. Here, the academic literature is relatively silent. A central goal of our study is to highlight existing or potential PPA strategies that are effective.

Many scholars find party assistance efforts ineffective for multiple reasons. As noted above, Carothers, perhaps most prolific among democracy assistance analysts, finds party assistance programs to be generally ineffective. He acknowledges the structural constraints that make it difficult for outside interventions to affect something as fundamental as the development of political parties in another country. But he also fundamentally questions party assistance strategies. Carothers argues with some justification, for example, that much party assistance is modeled on a “mythic model of parties in established democracies” as “internally democratic, financially transparent . . . ideologically coherent . . . and driven by ethical and policy principles.”<sup>23</sup> Similarly, he suggests that donors and program implementers do not understand well enough the real incentives and political contexts in which they are operating and fail to engage in “strategic thinking about the context for [party] aid.”<sup>24</sup> In a nice twist on the typical complaints about political parties in new democracies, Carothers describes a corresponding “standard lament among people in recipient parties about Western political party aid” because of its reliance on “pre-set,

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<sup>21</sup> Thomas Carothers, “Political Party Aid,” Paper prepared for the Swedish International Development Agency (October 2004), p. 20.

<sup>22</sup> See, in particular, Max Weber’s, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Ronald Inglehart, “The Renaissance of Political Culture,” *The American Political Science Review* 82:4 (December 1988), pp. 1203-1230, Samuel Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations: Remaking of the World Order* (Simon & Schuster 1998).

<sup>23</sup> Carothers, *Weakest Link*, p. 123.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 131.

standardized designs not well-adapted to their particular context and mechanistic methods of implementation.”<sup>25</sup>

In examining six case-study countries, including Romania and Russia in the E&E region, Carothers is skeptical about the effectiveness of past programs and future prospects for political party assistance. This echoes his previous criticisms of democracy and governance (DG) programs more generally because: (1) they are based on the faulty assumption that party development in transition countries will parallel the Western experience with party development; (2) they employ “cookie cutter” approaches without attention to variations in local context; (3) they are driven by the ideologies of donor countries while paying little attention to “buy in” from domestic activists; (4) they target “marginal people” rather than truly consequential activists; and (5) they typically involve training seminars that are dull and lecture based and allow for little participation by domestic activists.<sup>26</sup> Some of these critiques border on caricature—Carothers himself notes approvingly the institutes’ use of “third-country” trainers, “trainer-of-trainer methods,” “leadership academies,” “distance learning,” and consideration of the connection between party development and economic reform<sup>27</sup>—but each has some validity as well.

Several studies, however, have suggested that DG assistance probably contributed to substantial party development in some countries, perhaps as much by improving the political environment as by aiding political parties directly. The suggestion of a positive correlation between party assistance and party development demands further attention. Here, the case studies of John Glenn, Sarah Mendelson and Michael McFaul are informative. Glenn, for example, stresses that timing is key, that party assistance provided at critical junctures—most notably immediately following regime or leadership change—can help transform inchoate coalitions into capable, developed parties.<sup>28</sup> Mendelson stresses how technical assistance programs can alter environments long inimical to party competition. Thus, she finds in the cases of the Philippines, Chile and Serbia, aiding parallel vote counts, albeit not party assistance per se, increased transparency and limited the potential for fraud during parliamentary elections, which in turn is crucial for the development of healthy parties.<sup>29</sup> McFaul agrees on the value of parallel vote counts but, in the case of the contested 2004 Ukrainian presidential elections, asserts that “micro-methods” of election monitoring that uncovered systematic electoral fraud were central to the decision by the Central Election Commission and the Supreme Court not to ratify the vote count.<sup>30</sup>

Although support for election monitoring may help improve the environment for party assistance and other democracy and governance strategies, these findings do not address party assistance as such. In addition to stressing the value of election monitoring, though, McFaul’s analysis highlights two variables often overlooked in scholarly studies of de-

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<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 120.

<sup>26</sup> Thomas Carothers, *Aiding Democracy Abroad: The Learning Curve* (Washington: Carnegie, 1999) and “Political Party Aid.”

<sup>27</sup> Carothers, *Weakest Link*, p. 127-29.

<sup>28</sup> John K. Glenn, “Civil Society Transformed: International Aid to New Political Parties in the Czech Republic and Slovakia,” *Voluntas* 11:2 (2000).

<sup>29</sup> Mendelson, “Democracy Assistance,” p. 104.

<sup>30</sup> McFaul, “The 2004 Presidential Elections in Ukraine and the Orange Revolution,” p. 26.

mocracy assistance: the critical role of symbolism and the importance of easily understood campaign platforms. Party assistance strategies that highlight the importance of symbolism, slogans and branding as well as strategies that emphasize clear prodemocracy messages, we can hypothesize from McFaul's analysis of the Ukrainian case, are likely to meet with greater success.

McFaul's analysis of Our Ukraine's 2004 success finds parallels in the broader comparative politics network on transnational activism. The studies of Sidney Tarrow and of Margaret Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, for example, demonstrate the critical role that symbolism and what Keck and Sikkink describe as easily understood "chains of causality" have in the fortunes of social mobilization movements.<sup>31</sup> Thus, activist networks that develop readily identifiable symbols (e.g., the World Wild Life Fund's panda, Amnesty International's candle, Our Ukraine's orange ribbons) are more likely to succeed than those that ignore the critical importance of branding. Similarly, networks that champion clear messages (e.g., protect endangered species, stop torture, place criminals in jail) are more likely to resonate with potential supporters than movements that champion more abstract concepts (such as, alas, democracy, rule of law and social equality). These many have some implications for campaign-related party assistance.

### *Agency Variables*

Regardless of how conducive to reform an environment may be and how well-designed foreign assistance programs are, the success of party assistance programs depends on individual actors, on the agency of people directly involved in promoting *and* preventing party development. Many political science analyses begin with the assumption that actors seek power and, more precisely, seek first to attain, second to maintain and last to maximize political power. The implications of this for party assistance programs are readily seen in the many "failed" and "stalled" transitions of Eurasia, Africa and now the Middle East. That is, although leaders may outwardly cultivate an image of political reform so as to secure international approval and aid, domestically these same leaders work to ensure that the reform is no more than a façade.

Entrenched political elites, as Guillermo O'Donnell and Philippe Schmitter note in their study, *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule*, are reluctant to accept the rules of the party game should they perceive threats to personal power.<sup>32</sup> Rather than concede defeat when challenged by opponents in what O'Donnell and Schmitter aptly describe as a "multi-dimensional chess game," entrenched elites may simply toss the chessboard (along with the opponents' pieces) and choose oppression. Alternatively, as Joel Migdal notes, entrenched elites may routinely undermine potential contenders—political parties, economic elites, charismatic leaders—so they need never face real opposition.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> See Sidney Tarrow, *The New Transnational Activism* (Cambridge, 2005) and Margaret E. Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, *Activists Beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics* (Cornell, 1998).

<sup>32</sup> Guillermo O'Donnell and Philippe C. Schmitter, *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986).

<sup>33</sup> Joel Migdal, *Strong Societies and Weak States: State-Society Relations and State Capabilities in the Third World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988).



In short, critical to the success of party assistance programs is the agency of ruling elites. Well designed PPA strategies and favorable political environments may alter elites' perceptions of their interests. Equally important to the success of party assistance, though, may be the role not of aid or assistance, but of diplomacy and Realpolitik. An entrenched leader's calculation to tolerate potentially threatening political parties, to eschew violence and, ultimately, to leave power may depend as much on warnings an ambassador delivers as on demands from within society. To this end, the greater the degree of coordination between aid and diplomatic missions, the more likely PPA programs can surmount what is likely the greatest impediment to success: the tendency among even once reform-minded elites to reject democratic rules of the game so as to maintain power.

### **Summary of Comparative Politics Literature Review**

We consider the categories of *structure*, *strategy* and *agency* as ways to conceptualize and identify potential hypotheses for explaining variations in party assistance outcomes. These three categories emerge from our review of the scholarly literature on party assistance and the broader comparative politics literature on democracy assistance. It is worth stressing, as we noted in the introduction, that this scholarly literature is young and, though perhaps methodologically and theoretically more rigorous, nevertheless is less developed than USAID and policy practitioners' own assessments of party assistance. Recognizing this, we next turn to a review of the applied literature, including assessments, evaluations and studies of party assistance of donors and implementers in transition countries.

### **APPLIED LITERATURE REVIEW**

The previous section reviewed the comparative politics literature on political parties and, to the extent it exists, political party assistance. With that background, this section surveys studies commissioned or conducted by donors and PPA implementers on political party assistance and broader democracy and governance assistance that includes political party assistance. USAID commissioned and funded many of the studies discussed here.

#### **Political Structure**

##### *Analysis of Political Context*

IRI's *Why We Lost: Explaining the Rise and Fall of the Center-Right Parties in Central Europe, 1996-2002*, edited by Peter Ucen and Jan Erik Surotchak and funded by USAID, examines the dynamics of political volatility in seven countries in Central and Eastern Europe from the perspective of the center-right parties that gained and lost power in these countries in the late 1990s and early in the current decade. This analysis discounts structural constraints as major factors in the development problems experienced by the parties being studied. It emphasizes the importance of effective political strategy as the variable that determines electoral victory or defeat. In relatively constraint-free environments, these center-right parties encountered their reverses through some combination of (1) difficulties with painful reforms while governing; (2) internal party organization, ideological crisis and infighting; and (3) inadequate communication with the public.

*Why We Lost* contains a thorough, detailed analysis of political developments in the region during that time, but focuses its analysis on the actions and the strategies of the parties themselves rather than party assistance as such. The three sources of failure addressed do offer insight into potential future work in these and similar situations and suggest a possible link between the political environment and PPA priorities.

The study's focus on one slice of the ideological spectrum means it does not necessarily have that much to say about the broader goal of improving the parties and the party system generally, as opposed to boosting the prospects of individual parties. Volatility in one party's fortunes does not tell us much about the state of party development in the country as a whole, even when that volatility is mirrored across a number of different countries. As *Why We Lost* acknowledges, the alternation of power could equally be taken as a sign of healthy party development. The implications of working only with ideologically aligned parties are discussed below.

Krishna Kumar sees a lack of country-specific expertise among implementers as one of the major shortcomings of political party assistance. Kumar notes that implementers' knowledge of the political histories of the countries they are working in has been improving over time, but the link between that knowledge and designing effective strategies tailored to specific situations still appears to be weak, or at least lacking any formal structure. Schoofs and de Zeeuw suggest that the research agenda should include greater comparative study of different political contexts.<sup>34</sup> Without necessarily agreeing with Kumar's assessment about the extent of country-specific knowledge among implementers, the DI team agrees that further comparative study of party assistance in different contexts and further efforts to structure strategies to particular circumstances would be worthwhile. DI hopes the current study marks a step in that direction.

USAID political party assessments, such as those recently carried out in Armenia (2005) and the Palestinian Territories (2006), by their very nature examine political context when making recommendations on future PPA work.<sup>35</sup> But they are also of course specific to the given country, and as snapshots in time do not necessarily allow for analysis of how context affects party development over time. If the fundamental question is how political context should inform PPA strategies, more detailed analyses are necessary.

### ***Reforming Structures: Party Systems and Political Finance***

Although the IRI study suggests that political developments in Central Europe around 2000 were due more to strategic variables than to structural ones, other analyses of party assistance have emphasized the importance of changing underlying structures and party systems to achieving more successful outcomes.

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<sup>34</sup> Krishna Kumar, "International Political Party Assistance: An Overview and Analysis." Netherlands Institute for International Relations, Conflict Resolution Unit (October 2004); Steven Schoofs and Jeroen de Zeeuw, "Lessons Learned in Political Party Assistance," Netherlands Institute of International Relations (November 2004).

<sup>35</sup> E.g., Associates in Rural Development, "Armenia Political Party Assessment" (Assessment for USAID, May 2005).



Carothers finds trends toward increased aid to party systems encouraging. He commends efforts to reform the underlying legal and financial framework for parties in general, including focus on political party laws and party finances. Carothers considers these to be important steps in expanding and improving party assistance going forward and describes them as the areas of assistance with significant potential for improving political parties. He still suggests that the benefits of structural and party system reform will most likely be modest, but he highlights both as strategies that might be able to bring about more fundamental changes, if the strategies to implement such reforms are refined going forward.<sup>36</sup>

To a considerable extent these efforts are already underway. Several studies have emphasized efforts to reform and improve the legal framework for political parties. As part of NDI's USAID-funded series on "Political Parties and Democracy in Theoretical and Practical Perspectives," Kenneth Janda's paper on "Adopting Party Law" considers five models of how states regulate political parties. He argues for moderation between "too much" party law, which may have a chilling effect on the formation and development of parties, and "too little" party law, which may encourage a multitude of minority parties and result in a chaotic party system.<sup>37</sup> An MSI study for USAID of political party reform in Latin America and Schoofs and de Zeeuw also call for initiatives to change the incentives that shape party behavior by reforming the regulatory framework and paying more attention to political party systems in general.<sup>38</sup>

The area of political finance seems to have received a great deal of attention within the broader structural framework. As Carothers notes, "programs to assist new or struggling democracies develop their systems of regulation concerning party financing multiply rapidly year by year."<sup>39</sup> Another NDI paper, Michael Johnson's analysis of "Political Finance Policy, Parties and Democratic Development," recommends a permissive policy aimed at distribution and empowerment, over a restrictive "anti-corruption" policy, arguing that parties in transitional societies typically confront pervasive scarcity, and that a restrictive approach will make it difficult to sustain broad-based, active political participation.<sup>40</sup>

IFES's Jeffrey Carlson and Marcin Walecki, meanwhile, propose a strategic "money and politics" program, based on experience in a number of countries. Their paper discusses a "disclosure cycle" involving assessment of the environment, regulation, compliance, dis-

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<sup>36</sup> Carothers, *Weakest Link*, p. 190. He points out that party programs tend not to address another structural issue, the electoral system, because (1) the electoral system is a given in most new democracies by the time party assistance takes place, (2) electoral system changes have less effect on key concerns of aid providers, such as internal democracy, and (3) the effect on party systems is only one of many considerations in choosing electoral law reforms. *Ibid.*, pp. 191-92.

<sup>37</sup> Kenneth Janda, "Political Parties and Democracy in Theoretical and Practical Perspectives: Adopting Party Law" (National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, 2005).

<sup>38</sup> Management Systems International, *Latin American & Caribbean Political Party Reform: A Desk Assessment* (Paper for USAID/LAC and DCHA, December 17, 2004); Schoofs and de Zeeuw, p. 38.

<sup>39</sup> Carothers, *Weakest Link*, p. 196.

<sup>40</sup> Michael Johnson, "Political Parties and Democracy in Theoretical and Practical Perspectives: Political Finance Policy, Parties and Democratic Development," (National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, 2005).

closure mechanisms, monitoring and oversight, and self-evaluation.<sup>41</sup> The paper offers an interesting counterpoint to Johnson and perhaps offers a middle ground between the two extremes, permissive and restrictive, he presents.

Jeff Fisher, Marcin Walecki and Jeffrey Carlson of IFES carry the analysis to political finance in post-conflict societies. They identify lessons learned from eight case studies and suggest ideal requirements with guidelines for introducing political finance regulation in post-conflict societies. In such societies, they argue, good political finance practices can help build a sense of fair play, which itself can help consolidate peace.<sup>42</sup> This conclusion might be debatable, though; political finance does not seem like an obvious priority for party assistance in postconflict environments.

Carothers, meanwhile, points out that political finance remains a major problem even in developed democracies. It is susceptible to the broader flaw he finds common in party assistance of viewing parties in developing countries under the lens of the “mythic model” of Western parties. That is, in political finance as in other areas, party assistance runs the risk of creating too high a standard for developing party systems, a standard that is often not met in the developed world.

Unfortunately, efforts to bring about structural reforms in party systems, while promising, face several problems. As Carothers notes, getting laws enacted is significantly easier than ensuring that they are enforced, and changing the legal framework is by itself not enough to overcome all the other factors that contribute to weak or corrupt party systems.<sup>43</sup>

## Strategy

### *Party Assistance Approaches*

USAID supports party-building programs in three core areas. First, to enhance the *electoral competitiveness* of parties, programs seek to help parties and candidates develop electoral campaigns and campaign skills, including campaign strategies, public opinion polling, message development, communications and media relations, recruitment of party members and volunteers, fundraising, and get-out-the-vote campaigns. Second, to address *internal party organization* by helping develop broad-based, viable and internally democratic parties, programs typically work on developing party bylaws and codes of conduct, building local party chapters, increasing membership, developing party leaders, using polling and other survey research, developing messages and platforms, communicating with the public, mobilizing resources, and enhancing internal party democracy. Third, to help parties participate effectively in *governance*, party programs address coalition building and interparty relations, understanding legislative and legal procedures, creating effective legislative caucuses and committees, developing policies, interacting with

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<sup>41</sup> Jeffrey Carlson and Marcin Walecki, “Money and Politics Program: Guide to Applying Lessons Learned” (IFES, May 2006).

<sup>42</sup> Jeff Fisher, Marcin Walecki and Jeffrey Carlson, “Political Finance in Post-Conflict Societies” (IFES, May 2006).

<sup>43</sup> Carothers, *Weakest Link*, p. 210.

advocacy groups and the media, communicating with constituents and the public, working with or in local government, and working in the political opposition.<sup>44</sup> This typology is useful for understanding and assessing the purposes and pros and cons of a wide variety of party assistance strategies and tactics.

Traditional approaches to political party assistance have focused on early stages of party development, particularly in the first two categories, electoral competitiveness and internal party organization. The party institutes have conducted electoral assistance programs, such as training in campaign strategy and tactics for parties and candidates, in most countries in the region. Also common are party building and organizational development programs, including constituency development, grassroots campaigns, membership expansion, leadership training, policy development, and efforts targeting women, youth and minorities.

The party institutes also provide assistance in support of the governance role of parties, especially by working with parties and elected officials in legislatures. These programs provide legislative training and address such issues as party caucuses, committee structures, constituent services and communications.

Party assistance tactics include survey research and training and individual consultations at the national and local levels. NDI reports it has worked at both the national and local levels in nearly every country where it has programs. (See Appendix E.) Targeted study missions are also commonly employed, and criticized, tools. Party assistance programs also facilitate international relationships, as with the so-called political party internationals, and share new technologies.

More recent approaches have also focused greater attention on more inclusive selection of parties and leaders, outreach to local parties and officials, and links with other sectors, especially civil society. Newer approaches would also include the kinds of legal and regulatory reform that are not normally included in the three core areas discussed above. As Carothers notes, party assistance strategies over the last decade have been increasingly incorporating programs supporting “reforms in the basic rules and regulations that govern party life, such as political party law and laws relating to party finance.”<sup>45</sup>

Notably, according to the detailed information provided by NDI, approaches to party assistance differ in some significant respects between Europe and Eurasia. Assistance for parties in legislatures, a typical form of governance-related party assistance, has been relatively common in targeted countries in Europe but less so in Eurasia. Perhaps not surprisingly, this suggests that party programs have evolved more of a governance focus in Europe. Technology transfers are often provided in Europe but are infrequent in Eurasia. Conversely, election-related assistance, though it is still common throughout the region, is more frequent in Eurasia than in Europe. (See Appendix E.) This is likely indicative of the relative political development of the two regions, and party assistance pro-

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<sup>44</sup> Office of Democracy and Governance, Bureau for Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance, U.S. Agency for International Development, *USAID Political Party Assistance* (April 1999), 39-42.

<sup>45</sup>Carothers, *Weakest Link*, p. 216.

grams may evolve to support parties in legislatures in Eurasia if significant democratic transitions emerge

### *Party Assistance and Civil Society*

Sylvia Babus observes “an increased emphasis on democratic advocacy and support for civil society” in political party programs.<sup>46</sup> The party institutes have worked with civil society groups, but they point out that assistance to civil society cannot serve as a substitute for party assistance.

To some extent, these concerns are echoed in the literature. Kumar suggests that funding is skewed too far towards civil society promotion and calls for a different distribution of resources across programs.<sup>47</sup> Schoofs and de Zeeuw note the tense relationship between political parties and civil society and suggest a need to focus some civil society aid toward strengthening political parties, for example by promoting think tanks as forums for political parties.<sup>48</sup> USAID’s study on *Civil Society Groups and Political Parties* urges mutually reinforcing program options for the development of both parties and civil society. Still, the study does argue, logically, that if political parties are a principal problem for democratization in a given setting, effort should be focused directly on parties, rather than hoping for spillover effects from working with civil society.<sup>49</sup>

In general, if we are looking to support party development in weak party systems, direct assistance to parties will probably be preferable to trying to use other DG programs to address party deficiencies tangentially. The literature does encourage linkage between programs, though, and we find below that civil society organizations can help create a better climate for party development. But if we expect DG programs to support political party assistance, the design for linkage should be explicit on the front end.

### *Choice of Partners and the Question of Impartiality*

As the brief party assistance literature suggests, one of the most crucial strategic questions for party assistance is the selection of local partners. Assistance providers must decide which parties or groups of parties to work with.

Under what Carothers calls the “fraternal method” of party building, party aid providers work with ideologically aligned counterparts. Building on traditional European transnational political networks, foundations affiliated with political parties in Germany, Britain and Scandinavia favor this approach. Defenders of the fraternal method argue that the net effect will be balanced because of different aid providers helping parties across the political spectrum and that ideological affinities lead to greater trust which facilitates ac-

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<sup>46</sup> Sylvia Babus, “A Review of Political Party Assistance in Europe and Eurasia” (Report prepared for USAID/EE/DG, September 2002), p. 4.

<sup>47</sup> Krishna Kumar, “International Political Party Assistance: An Overview and Analysis.” Netherlands Institute for International Relations, Conflict Resolution Unit (October 2004).

<sup>48</sup> Schoofs and de Zeeuw, p. 2.

<sup>49</sup> USAID Office of Democracy and Governance, Bureau of Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance, USAID, “Civil Society Groups and Political Parties: Supporting Constructive Relations” (Occasional Paper Series, March 2004).

cess, influence and effectiveness. Carothers finds a number of problems with this approach, however. Such an approach tends to favor some parties in emerging democracies over others and emphasizes, for example, largely inconsequential exchange visits and study tours that do more to build relationships and advance the interests of their sponsoring organizations than to further the process of democratization. He also argues persuasively that European party assistance, at least in part, “has diplomatic rather than pro-democratic aims,” working to build long-term fraternal relationships with potential future partners in the European Parliament, for example.<sup>50</sup> For that matter, Carothers questions the prevailing European ideological model. In many parts of the world, he says, “the left-right spectrum often has little relevance at all. The party scene is instead divided up along other lines, such as religion, ethnicity and regionalism, or is simply a mix of parties with few clear differences beyond the contending personalities and ambitions of their leaders.”<sup>51</sup>

Likewise, U.S. assistance sometimes engages only with particular parts of the political spectrum. Both NDI and IRI have aided democratic opposition parties and coalitions in preparing for elections against entrenched semiauthoritarian regimes.<sup>52</sup> In the manner of the European party foundations, IRI has supported ideologically aligned parties or party coalitions, at times in some countries.<sup>53</sup> In postcommunist Europe in the early and mid-1990s (including in Bulgaria, Poland and Romania), for example, IRI supported ideologically cohesive center-right coalitions with campaign aid in advance of particular elections. IRI viewed this as assisting prodemocracy forces against postcommunist forces with an uncertain commitment to democracy and as an attempt to level the playing field. It continues to support center-right politics in some circumstances, as, for example, in Macedonia where it recently established with funding from the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) a new policy think tank, The Ohrid Institute, that will “lobby for free-market policies, lower taxes and more effective and efficient government in Macedonia.”<sup>54</sup> But IRI reports that it has largely moved away from this approach and that in places like Croatia, Serbia and Slovakia it has worked with more ideologically diverse coalitions, ranging from social democrats to conservatives, that faced illiberal, nationalistic and autocratic regimes.

Kumar identifies partisan favoritism in targeting assistance as a major potential problem for party assistance. Although he cites Serbia, Nicaragua and Cambodia as examples of partisan assistance that has been successful in promoting democratic transitions, Kumar asserts that “most policymakers and practitioners agree that partisan assistance to political parties should be avoided.”<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Carothers, *Weakest Link*, p. 143.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 117.

<sup>52</sup> Carothers, *Weakest Link*, pp. 153-54.

<sup>53</sup> E.g., Peter Ucen and Jan Erik Surotchak, “Why We Lost: Explaining the Rise and Fall of the Center-Right Parties in Central Europe, 1996-2002” (International Republican Institute, 2005).

<sup>54</sup> “IRI Launches New Think Tank in Macedonia” (Press release, November 2, 2006), available at <http://www.iri.org/europe/macedonia/2006-11-02-Macedonia.asp>.

<sup>55</sup> Kumar, p. 24

Considering European as well as U.S. assistance, Carothers sees a trend away from the fraternal method in any event. “Party aid,” he argues, “is marked by movement away from single-party efforts toward multiparty programs. The multiparty focus often involves more systematic attempts to affect the overall party system in a country.”<sup>56</sup>

Historically, USAID has urged transparent, inclusive eligibility criteria for participation in party programs. In effect codifying this policy in 2003, USAID’s *Political Party Assistance Policy* provides that USAID programs “do not seek to determine election outcomes” and “must make a good faith effort to assist *all democratic* parties with equitable levels of assistance.”<sup>57</sup> This is intended to ensure that party programs are focused on long-term development as well as to avoid inappropriate interference in the electoral politics of other countries in violation of norms of political sovereignty. But the Implementation Guidance for the *Policy* acknowledges that, where there are a large number of parties, it may not be “practical or cost-effective” to provide assistance to them all.<sup>58</sup>

At the same time, the *Policy* prohibits assistance to “nondemocratic parties.”<sup>59</sup> The Implementation Guidance suggests “key indicators of a party’s democratic credentials” include (1) “support for peaceful, democratic means to obtain power,” (2) “respect for human rights and the rule of law,” and (3) “respect for freedom of religion, press, speech, and association.”<sup>60</sup> While the consensus favors providing assistance to multiple parties, the party institutes have always avoided working with nondemocratic parties or parties that advocate violence.<sup>61</sup>

Judgments about whether parties are “democratic” or “significant” often fall into gray areas and are sometimes a matter of disagreement between USAID and the party institutes. The Implementation Guidance does not offer further instruction on how to make these judgments or how to balance stated commitments (rhetoric) and actions. But the complexity of political environments makes party selection, in bringing together a host of factors (political, institutional, foreign policy, budgetary), inherently complicated. Debate and discussion about these naturally gray areas should foster agreement on outcomes that are respectful of and calibrated to local political environments.

Yet, political party assistance remains one of the most controversial types of DG programming. Political elites in targeted societies are suspicious of outside interventions that may affect basic political power relationships. Those offering assistance to parties often are believed to have strong partisan intent, and many in recipient countries continue to believe that outsiders provide funding directly to one side.

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<sup>56</sup>Carothers, *Weakest Link*, p. 216.

<sup>57</sup> *USAID Political Party Assistance Policy*, p. 1.

<sup>58</sup> *USAID Political Party Assistance Policy Implementation Guidance*.

<sup>59</sup> U.S. Agency for International Development, *USAID Political Party Assistance Policy*, PD-ABY-359 (September 2003), p. 1.

<sup>60</sup> U.S. Agency for International Development, *USAID Political Party Assistance Policy Implementation Guidance*, PD-ABY-359 (September 2003).

<sup>61</sup> Carothers, *Weakest Link*, p. 118.



### *Better Evaluations and Measurement*

A common if somewhat banal criticism of party assistance in the applied literature is the lack of effective program evaluation and results measurement. USAID assessments and evaluations conclude that party assistance has yet to resolve the challenge of balancing Strategic Objectives (ultimate results, e.g. democratic transitions, election outcomes) and Intermediate Results (e.g. party behavior) as the defining measures of success. They emphasize the importance of assuring the long-term linkage between macro-level goals and program-level objectives and outputs.

There have been some recent ambitious efforts to explore the effectiveness of democracy assistance. The Center on Democracy, Development and the Rule of Law at Stanford University has begun a multi-year project to look at the “external sources of democracy.” Finkel, Perez-Linan and Seligson recently completed a comprehensive quantitative analysis commissioned by USAID of the impact of democracy and governance assistance from 1990 to 2003.<sup>62</sup> And USAID’s Democracy and Governance Office has commissioned an ongoing study by the National Academies of Sciences on evaluating the impact of democracy and governance programs. The study is designing pilot impact evaluations using randomized trials for DG programs. But while these studies may help sort out causality for democracy and governance programs and contribute to understanding of the context for political party assistance, they do not specifically address political party assistance.

Agreeing with the need for better results measurement in party assistance programs, Babus finds some progress, as independent assessments have proven to be valuable tools. But she notes that such concerns have led Missions to prepare new cooperative agreements with the party institutes to ensure better accountability through monitoring and evaluation and improved internal assessments using specific results indicators.

The Latin America study calls for an improved methodology and indicators for conducting regular, systematic political party assessments. It recommends partnering with other organizations, such as Transparency International, the OAS and the UNDP, and the academic community to encourage better, more contemporary analysis. This recommendation would apply equally in Europe and Eurasia.

Likewise, Schoofs and de Zeeuw suggest that implementers are not learning from experience. They urge greater attention to publicly available systematic evaluations and impact assessments. They also suggest a research agenda to (1) develop basic data on international assistance flows, (2) map different party systems (which International IDEA has already begun), (3) undertake a comparative study of different contexts for party assistance, and (4) undertake more and better program evaluations.

USAID documents address several ongoing challenges to political party assistance: (1) devising a concrete set of realistic and specific outcomes, (2) sorting out the role of political parties from other success factors (e.g., charismatic leaders, civil society move-

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<sup>62</sup> Finkel, Perez-Linan and Seligson, “Effects of US Foreign Assistance on Democracy Building.” (2005). The study found that elections and political process programs have had a strong impact.

ments, independent media, the economy, global trends, etc.), and (3) identifying specific contributions of political parties (e.g., coalition building and unifying the opposition, organizing protests and giving impetus to social momentum, combating fraud, presenting a viable alternative and citizen choice).

Carothers examines why USAID and the party institutes have not been more successful in evaluating party assistance programs. Outside evaluations “imposed by USAID” and conducted by development consulting firms are “rarely are a very happy experience for the party institutes,” he suggests, and “usually do not seem to produce much learning.” Carothers identifies some reasons for the weakness of many such evaluations, including focus on project outputs rather than results, “superficial indicators,” insufficient analysis of parties, and muddled thinking about causation. “When the evaluations are critical,” he adds, “the party institutes push back and the criticisms end up more as matters of dispute than as opportunities for learning or improvement.”<sup>63</sup>

The institutes express understandable concerns with the inherent difficulty of identifying quantifiable results for programs that are not easily quantifiable, and they note frequent changes in approaches to monitoring and evaluation mandated by USAID. IRI reports it is beginning a new, comprehensive study of program evaluation.

In general, the literature suggests that party assistance funders and providers need to do a better job of analyzing their own work. They should develop better systems for measuring results, formulating lessons learned, and sharing these lessons and best practices across DG programs, countries and regions. The development and evolution of programs should be a result of intentional, reasoned changes leading to new approaches and phases of work. This study addresses this issue further and offers some recommendations in the section on Findings, below.

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<sup>63</sup> Carothers, *Weakest Link*, pp. 126-27.



### III. FINDINGS AND BEST PRACTICES

Drawing on the case studies, the literature review, and other research and experience, the following sections describe DI's findings and conclusions. These include consideration of best practices. The case-study narratives for each country provide much of the basis for and further explanation of these findings.

The findings are organized into three sections: (a) Structure/Environment, (b) Strategy and (c) Agency/Implementation. The Structure/Environment section summarizes findings about the effects of political environment on party assistance in each of the four case-study countries. The Strategy section considers several different findings and conclusions about party assistance approaches. Finally, the Agency/Implementation section offers findings about the management and implementation of party assistance.

#### A. STRUCTURE/ENVIRONMENT

As the Literature Review suggests, variations in structure, that is, variations in the environment within which party assistance occurs, can influence the degree of success of political party assistance strategies. Structural factors such as a country's "neighborhood" or geography, political legacy, degree of economic development and extent of common identity within its domestic population can either impede or support efforts at political party assistance. The following sections address structural factors that affect party development in each of the four case-study countries. We then go on to suggest some tentative, more general prescriptions about party assistance programs in different political environments.

#### Romania—A Best Case for Political Party Assistance

Romania enjoys an environment conducive to political party development. Its proximity to and now membership in the European Union ensures steady incentives for continued democratic reform. In addition to its democratic neighborhood Romania's economic wealth relative to the other cases under review here provides a firm foundation for democratic stability. Romania's GDP per capita, at \$2,259, is nearly double that of Serbia's, the second wealthiest country in our four-case comparison.<sup>64</sup> Although there is considerable debate within the comparative politics literature as to the role economics has in *initiating* political reform, transition scholars do agree that higher levels of economic wealth are better at *sustaining* democratization processes once they have begun.<sup>65</sup>

Democracy and, equally important, party politics are also forms of governance that are historically familiar to Romanians. Interwar Romania, particularly Romania before the

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<sup>64</sup> World Bank World Development Indicators, 2005 GDP per capita in 2000 constant US Dollars. For comparison, the GDP per capita for Serbia, Georgia and Kyrgyzstan are: \$1,369, \$971 and \$319, respectively.

<sup>65</sup> For a helpful review of this literature, see Adam Przeworski, Fernando Papaterra and Limongi Neto, "Modernization: Theories and Facts," *World Politics* 49:2 (January 1997).

return of King Carl in 1930, was a multiparty parliamentary democracy.<sup>66</sup> This important albeit brief experience with democracy helps Romanian society and political elites frame the communist past as an aberration, as an externally implemented departure from what had been Romania's pre-World War II democratic trajectory.

Last, in contrast to Serbia, Georgia and Kyrgyzstan—all countries that have endured bloody, ethnically based conflicts—relations between Romania's ethnic majority and the Hungarian and Roma minorities have remained relatively peaceful.<sup>67</sup> Although ethnicity plays an important role in Romanian politics, ethnic minorities are neither excluded from participating in politics nor, moreover, have Hungarians and Roma been prevented from achieving representation in local and national level governments. While the Roma in particular continue to confront discrimination and remain underrepresented and there have been occasional episodes of violence, for the most part Romania's ethnic minorities are empowered members of the broader Romanian civic polity and share a civic identity that enables rather than detracts from political party formation.

Romania's favorable environment provides no absolute guarantee of strong and enduring political parties. Nevertheless, the country's proximity to the European Union as well as other environmental assets will continue to move Romania toward multiparty democracy. Romanians are capable of redressing the lingering challenges of their communist past and deepening ties with the European Union will help accelerate Romanian parties' move away from a tired, *nomenklatura* elite to a new and more vigorous democratic system. U.S. party assistance in Romania is for the most part ending, and so future party assistance will need to come from other sources.

### Serbia—Between Two Neighbors

Serbia, though not a member of the European Union, benefits from both its proximity to the EU and from the attractive prospect of joining the EU in the near future. Limiting the EU's democratizing pull, though, is Serbia's underperforming economy and a post-communist experience defined by ethnic tension and, at times, explosive nationalism. The strong performance in the January 2007 parliamentary elections of the nationalist Serbian Radical Party, which received the largest share of votes, suggests that economic discontent and opposition to Kosovo's independence continue to help shape Serbian political views. Such societies divided by ascriptive identities and lacking in cross-cutting cleavages often prove to be challenging environments for the emergence of multiparty democracies.<sup>68</sup>

Similarly challenging to the development of competitive party politics is Serbia's historical inclination toward Moscow and near absence of any democratic tradition. Although

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<sup>66</sup> Keith Hitchins, "Parlamentarismus in Rumänien (1930-1940): Demokratie in autoritären Umfeld," *Slavic Review* 58:4 (Winter 1999), p. 898.

<sup>67</sup> See, for example, Mihaela Mihailescu, "Dampening the Powder Keg: The role of Democratic Oppositions in Fostering Ethnic Peace in Post-Communist Romania and Slovakia," (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Minnesota, 2006).

<sup>68</sup> For more on party democracy in divided societies, see Donald Horowitz, "Democracy in Divided Societies," *Journal of Democracy*, 4:4, pp. 19-38.

Belgrade briefly flirted with a multiparty parliament in the late 1920s, power ultimately rested with Russian-educated King Aleksandar.<sup>69</sup> And although Belgrade's new national parliament is considerably more liberal than its interwar predecessor, the Russia option remains an attractive alternative to the many displeased with the West's, and particularly the EU's frequent criticism of Serbian nationalism.

In short, in contrast to Romania where a shared civic identity, EU membership and a comparatively robust economy mean continued movement toward liberal, multiparty democracy is likely, Serbia's structural constraints—in particular its charged ethnonationalism—indicate that initial, post-Milosevic democratic consolidation will remain tenuous. Given this comparative fragility, party assistance which encourages Serbian parties to identify cross-cutting rather than ethnic and nationalist driven platforms can help ensure Serbia moves forward, toward reform, rather than backward, toward identity-based conflict.

### **Georgia—Growing Euro-Atlantic Ties and a Troubled Soviet Legacy**

The symbolism and potentially democratizing pull of Tbilisi's growing Euro-Atlantic ties are everywhere present in Georgia. The ruling United National Movement (UNM) pairs its five-cross flag and the European Union's gold star circular emblem in much of its public relations materials. And almost all Georgian political parties stress the importance of growing Georgia-NATO cooperation.

At the same time, however, despite Tbilisi's current inclination toward the West, significant portions of nominally Georgian territory remain under Moscow's influence. South Ossetia and Abkhazia are de facto independent "statelets," each with populations that, though technically within Georgia's internationally recognized borders, nevertheless identify more with Putin than with Paris. Georgia's lack of any sustained pre-Soviet democratic legacy and, at the same time, the persistence of single-party-dominant politics, presents additional structural constraints to political party development. That is, though the democratic language and Euro-Atlantic orientation of Georgia's new ruling United National Movement is promising, the UNM nevertheless has been heavy-handed. Party assistance directed at providing democratic alternatives to the UNM is critical for creating a level political playing field—something desperately needed if a true multiparty system is to emerge in Georgia.

### **Kyrgyzstan—Opportunity for Political Party Assistance in Central Asia**

Kyrgyzstan, though perhaps the least conducive environment for political party assistance of the four cases we investigate, nevertheless presents the best case for political party assistance in Central Asia. Following popular protests that ultimately led to the ousting of former President Askar Akaev in March 2005, Kyrgyzstan's executive and legislative branches have competed to amend, rewrite and ultimately redefine constitutional mandates of power. The simple presence of this interbranch competition in Kyrgyzstan is, within the broader context of autocratic and executive-dominated Central Asian politics,

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<sup>69</sup> Christian Axboe Nielsen, "One State, One Nation, One King: The dictatorship of King Aleksandar and his Yugoslav project, 1929—1935," (Ph.D. Diss., Columbia University, 2002), p. 51.

an encouraging development towards multiparty democracy. That said, the country's many structural constraints present difficult challenges for those wishing to develop true, functioning political parties.

Kyrgyzstan is the poorest of the countries in our four-case comparison. Indeed, with a GDP per capita of just \$319, Kyrgyzstan's poverty levels are second only to Tajikistan among all former Soviet countries. Paralleling these economic challenges are ethnic and regional identities that divide ethnic Kyrgyz from ethnic Uzbeks and a northern, more "Russified" political elite from a southern, more traditionally Central Asian population. Rather than a unified country, Kyrgyzstan might be better conceived of as seven provinces loosely linked by Stalin's peculiar and problematic sense of "nation." For political elites, no matter how skilled, to create broad based, inclusive political parties in such an environment is, understandably, difficult.

Despite this troubling environment, however, Kyrgyzstan has made significant advances away from authoritarianism over the past two years. Grassroots social mobilization brought an end to Askar Akaev's autocratic rule and the new Bakiev executive, though it exhibits similar tendencies towards excessive presidentialism, nevertheless remains constrained by a vocal parliament. A well-functioning multiparty democracy likely remains a distant goal. But assistance programs that emphasize the development of and subsequent adherence to constitutional and legal foundations of party democracy can encourage Kyrgyzstan along this path away from autocracy and toward consolidated political reform.

### **Structural Variations and Assistance Strategies**

Despite a shared communist past, Romania, Serbia, Georgia and Kyrgyzstan each face markedly different structural constraints. As such, while political party assistance can play a positive role in each of these countries, the nature of this assistance must vary so as to address the differing environmental challenges each country confronts. For Romania, this may simply mean one last effort at assisting parties in their movement away from a *nomenklatura* to a meritocratic elite. In Serbia, assistance strategies would do well to encourage cross-cutting, issue-based party platforms so as to help diminish the divisive role of ethnic and nationalist politics. In Georgia, assistance strategies must promote democratic alternatives in an emerging dominant party system in which the UNM, its democratic ideals notwithstanding, applies its monopolistic control over state resources to the maintenance of uninterrupted rule. And last, in Kyrgyzstan, party assistance should take advantage of the opening that political stalemate provides for constitutional reform and for building the institutional foundations for future party democracy, while at the same time recognizing the potential for real political chaos. In all four countries, the assistance goal is the same: aiding the creation of democratic political parties capable of aggregating and representing social interests. The strategies for achieving this shared goal must be tailored to each country's structural constraints.

Democracy International's research and experience suggest some tentative hypotheses about the types of programs most appropriate or most likely to be successful in different circumstances. The effectiveness of political party assistance can be increased by adjust-

ing development strategies so as to address the varying challenges parties face under differing regime types. The following sections address this question in three different types of political environments in which the U.S. government supports political party assistance: (1) semiauthoritarian regimes initiating potentially competitive elections; (2) inchoate democracies attempting postelection consolidation, often after a transitional election has taken place; and (3) young democracies moving toward third and fourth round competitive elections.

These three situations might be thought of as phases in a democratic transition, although not all countries progress smoothly or sequentially through all three phases. The following discussion does not address authoritarian political environments, which we define for these purposes as environments in which party assistance inside the country is not possible, or collapsing states, where party assistance typically is not a priority.

### *Elections Under Semiauthoritarian Regimes*

For the purposes of this study, we define semiauthoritarian regimes to be those in which, in contrast to fully authoritarian states, the potential for meaningful competition does exist in national, regional and local elections. Four such semiauthoritarian regimes from our study illustrate this typology: (1) Serbia in the late 1990s under Milosevic; (2) Georgia under Shevardnadze; (3) Kyrgyzstan under Akaev; and (4) Kyrgyzstan under Bakiev. These four cases, and regimes in this typology more broadly, are marked by autocratic yet politically embattled executives. Though the source of executive insecurity may vary, the opening this insecurity provides spurs increased political contestation. This new contestation, in turn, further erodes executive control, and may ultimately open the way for meaningful electoral competition.

Although conditions of semiauthoritarianism are among the most compelling environments for political party assistance, they are also environments fraught with pitfalls. As illustrated by the events at Andijan in Uzbekistan in May 2005, in which government troops violently suppressed popular protests against what were seen as politically motivated arrests of local businessmen, executives, rather than allow contestation, may attempt increased repression. Political contestation may also devolve into armed conflict, as illustrated by the protracted civil war in Tajikistan in the 1990s. Alternatively, contestation may simply fizzle, as was the case in Kyrgyzstan for a time following Bakiev's assumption of power in March 2005. As such, the challenge for democracy supporters, both local and international, is to encourage movement toward competitive elections while at the same time working to protect against alternative, armed conflict or society's political disengagement. In contrast to inchoate democracies attempting postelection consolidation or young democracies moving toward subsequent rounds of competitive elections, norms and rules of competition have yet to be institutionalized and, as a result, political party assistance would do well to focus as much if not more on the process of elections as on the platforms, strategies, organizational capacity and internal democracy of individual parties contesting elections.

This focus on process in addition to platforms offers several advantages. First and perhaps most important, the process of competitive elections is something most actors, even

most autocratic executives, will publicly affirm. In short, whereas it may not be in the self interest of some to engage questions of corruption, patronage politics, or redistribution of powers among government branches, championing competitive elections is something all actors avow, at least in rhetoric. Embattled autocrats calculate—often mistakenly—that free elections, or at least discourse about free elections, are a means to shore up flagging support. And democracy proponents see this discourse as a means to maintain pressure on autocrats so as to prevent backsliding into repression and hard authoritarian rule. More immediately for international donors, because the process of competitive elections is something most actors affirm, political party assistance strategies that emphasize elections are more likely to succeed at early stages of political transition than strategies that focus on lightning rod issues such as corruption and patronage politics.

Second, focusing on the process of elections might encourage inclusive, broad-based political mobilization rather than narrow, ascriptive-based interest aggregation. This is particularly important in polities accustomed to zero-sum politics, that is, polities in which the perquisites of state rule have historically accrued to those groups that share clan, ethnic or regional identities with the ruling elite. Here the Kyrgyz case provides considerable insight. Under Akaev, a disproportionate share of wealth flowed to the north rather than to the south. Under Bakiev the pattern is reversing, with state resources now flowing to the south. Unfortunately, in the Kyrgyz case, the sudden departure of Akaev in March 2005 led to a rushed presidential election in which the ballot merely served as a referendum for an earlier negotiated outcome among political elites. In short, elites abandoned electoral process in favor of negotiated autocracy where dual executives—President Bakiev representing the south and Prime Minister Kulov representing the north—would champion their respective regional interests. Lamentably, this abandonment of electoral process in favor of ascriptive interests motivated the weakening of what was a broad-based pro-democracy movement with extensive cross-cutting cleavages.

At early stages of political change and party development, assistance programs that focus on electoral processes, for example programs that emphasize transferring skills and techniques such as campaign tactics, door-to-door campaigning, targeting voters and opinion research, resonate well with political actors. Such assistance is effective because it aligns with the immediate interests of actors and parties, that is, successfully competing in elections. This assistance provides valuable skills to nascent prodemocracy parties and coalitions and can help them compete politically against semiauthoritarian parties and governments. At the same time assistance that focuses on electoral processes exposes political actors to democratic norms and establishes relationships that will be useful for more ambitious assistance efforts in the future.

In sum, although much of political party assistance has focused on building party platforms and aiding internal democracy, we find that in semiauthoritarian settings characterized by insecure executives and a legacy of zero-sum politics focus on electoral processes is also important. The run-up to potentially competitive elections in semiauthoritarian settings is among the most tenuous periods of political transition. Embattled authoritarians may return to repression, and narrow interest articulation may lead to armed conflict. Prioritizing the process of elections over platform articulation, admittedly, may delay the emergence of issue-oriented, Western-style parties. At the same time, however, prioritiz-



ing electoral processes offers the advantage of (1) introducing a political discourse that most actors—including embattled authoritarians—will engage while (2) encouraging the formation of broad-based, pro-democracy coalition movements that, given their inclusiveness, limit the potential for divisive, ascriptive politics.

### *Postelection Consolidation*

Postelection transitional environments present new challenges and opportunities for political party promotion. In settings where elections yield little change in the ruling elite, the potential for backsliding to harder forms of autocratic rule as well as for public disillusionment in democracy persists. In Kyrgyzstan, for example, political elites negotiated the outcome of the 2005 presidential election prior to the public ballot and, predictably, the Bakiev government now exhibits many of the same authoritarian tendencies as did the previous regime. Indeed, there may be little difference between the pre- and post-election environment in these cases and, as such, political party assistance providers might consider continuing strategies appropriate for semiauthoritarian regimes.

Critically, however, should elections yield elite change, as they have in the Georgian, Serbian and Romanian cases, political party supporters can turn their attention to questions of how best to institutionalize norms and rules of competition, as well as how to build organizational capacity and internal democracy. Although one might anticipate that, following successful competitive elections, consolidation of new norms might be straightforward, post-electoral environments often prove more politically divisive than their semiauthoritarian counterparts. Whereas disparate interests often are willing to form coalitions in semiauthoritarian settings so as to achieve a shared goal of effecting competitive elections, once these elections are attained, these broad coalitions often collapse, creating an environment of hostility among erstwhile partners. Thus, the challenge—and great opportunity—in these cases is to limit democracy-destabilizing acrimony among constituent groups of former pro-democracy coalitions while, at the same time, encouraging these now divergent groups to develop political parties so as to best represent and articulate their interests and the interests of the broader electorate. Whereas in semiauthoritarian settings much of political party assistance is, paradoxically, better targeted at coalitions rather than at parties, it is following successful competitive elections that truly party-oriented assistance is most needed.

During the democratic consolidation phase of a transition, after transitional elections have been held, we suggest that party assistance programs should transition from a focus on elections, coalition politics and skills transfer to efforts to build the organizational capacity and internal democracy of inchoate, weak parties. There is no shortage of strategies that can and, indeed, should be pursued in assisting party development in postelection environments, but the DI team found two areas to be of particular concern: (1) party platform articulation and (2) constituent outreach.

Interviews in Serbia and Georgia revealed that parties, particularly those with limited representation in parliament and the executive, frequently had difficulty in articulating their platforms and differentiating these platforms from competitors. Notably, this inability to articulate coherent platforms was more pronounced in Georgia than in Serbia. One po-



tential cause behind this variation may be that Serbian parties have contested elections since 2000 whereas Georgian parties have participated in meaningful elections only since 2004. An alternative explanation—and something repeatedly stressed in DI’s interviews in Tbilisi—is that non-ruling political parties in Georgia face a qualitatively different environment than that of their Serbian counterparts. More specifically, whereas in Serbia the opposition coalition which came to power divided into factions or proto-parties, many of which won representation in the parliament, in Georgia one party, the UNM, won overwhelming influence in the parliament and executive. Given this concentration of power in one ruling party, Georgia’s other parties have centered their political discourse more on what some local analysts describe as “reactionary criticism” of the UNM than on developing self-defining and differentiating political platforms.

In sum, the challenges of assisting party platform development will likely vary given how coalition movements dissolve following competitive founding elections. Where the dissolution of coalition movements yields pluralism, political leaders will likely perceive a greater need for interparty differentiation and, as a result, will prove ready consumers of party assistance. Where the dissolution of coalition movements yields a new elite with unrivaled power in the executive and legislative branches, however, opposition leaders may find it easier to criticize the party in power rather than to define a coherent platform capable of demonstrating to the electorate what interests or ideologies their parties truly represent. As a result, the greatest obstacle for assistance strategies in these cases may be demonstrating to political parties, both in and out of power, why platform development is important in the first place.

The perceived need for voter outreach, like platform articulation, is similarly linked to how coalitions dissolve following founding elections. Here too, where dissolution yields pluralism, party leaders are more likely to appreciate how voter outreach can further electoral success. In contrast, where power lies disproportionately with one party, opposition leaders may perceive little return for extending the considerable efforts necessary in conducting effective voter outreach. In Georgia, for example, opposition party leaders repeatedly lamented that efforts at outreach were all but pointless given that such efforts would either be stymied or overshadowed due to the UNM’s privileges of incumbency and access to administrative resources.

For the practitioner of political party assistance, our stress on platform promotion and constituency outreach likely comes as no surprise. What is critical, though, and what perhaps deserves further attention, is that postelection environments differ in identifiable ways, and how these environments differ can inform how party assistance is conducted. Assessing the new political landscape, for example the multiple and more or less balanced proto-parties of Serbia versus the dominant party of Georgia, should allow implementers to prioritize assistance strategies.

Moving from the abstract to the specific, the above discussion suggests that party assistance programs in Serbia should be considerably different from party assistance programs in Georgia. For example, whereas working with the parliament may further party development in Serbia, centering assistance strategies on the Georgian parliament is less likely to yield positive results across the political party spectrum. Similarly, while it may be

comparatively straightforward to demonstrate to Serbian parties why platform development and constituency outreach are productive endeavors, the value of such activities will likely be less self-evident to political actors in Georgia.

This is not to suggest that such assistance strategies should be eschewed in Georgia or similar cases. But the target audience of these assistance strategies might be shifted from central party headquarters oriented toward winning seats in national parliament to activists seeking to contest local elections. For example, in contrast to MPs in Georgia's national parliament, two-thirds of whom are elected through proportional representation and thus have no identifiable local constituency, local MPs do have identifiable constituencies and, as a result, are more likely to see value in voter outreach and platform articulation. Bottom-up strategies to party development, it should be noted, pose administrative challenges and, as such, the implementation of these strategies may need to be limited to a few target regions. Nevertheless, given that party assistance strategies work best when they overlap with the incentives of target audiences, the tradeoff necessitated by shifting some resources from assisting national-level party leaderships to assisting local party activists may yield considerable returns over time.

### *Young Democracies in Subsequent Rounds of Competitive Elections*

Samuel Huntington offers a “two turnover test” for evaluating the durability of new democracies.<sup>70</sup> Specifically, Huntington suggests that once country leaderships have peacefully changed two times as result of national elections, we can conclude with some measure of certainty that the norms and institutions of democracy have consolidated in a given polity. Although too formulaic a measure to rely on by itself, this principle can be productively employed as one indicator of when to consider reducing political party assistance. Cycles of being voted out and then back into office provide powerful—and self-sustaining—incentives for political entrepreneurs to develop coherent and capable parties.

The Romanian and, to a somewhat lesser degree, the Serbian cases demonstrate these changed incentives. Here, U.S. party assistance has become increasingly sophisticated in recent years. In both countries the party institutes are working with local partners to develop GIS databases so that political parties might better target and cultivate constituencies. Similarly, local polling organizations, working in partnership with USAID and other bilateral and multilateral donors, conduct frequent surveys that political parties in turn use to develop and refine platforms and policies. In short, the majority of political actors in Romania and Serbia, having seen their fortunes wax and wane in multiple election cycles, perceive the value of constituent outreach and platform development and are eagerly adopting, employing and often times improving advanced campaign strategies.

The Romanian and Serbian cases suggest that the greatest challenge for political party assistance is not transferring knowledge but, rather, changing perceived incentives. Party assistance should seek ways to change these incentives and help political actors to con-

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<sup>70</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), pp. 266-6.

clude that, in environments of institutionalized uncertainty, mobilizing popular support helps win elections. This is not to say that technical assistance such as that which USAID is currently providing to political parties in Serbia and Romania is of no value. Rather, some Serbian and Romanian parties are eager consumers of this assistance. But the provision of advanced survey and GIS campaign strategies to political entrepreneurs only contributes to party development to the extent that it is linked to broader goals, such as platform development and internal party democracy.

It is instructive to note that in Kyrgyzstan, constructing GIS databases and conducting public opinion surveys are also valued techniques. Here though, it is economic rather than political entrepreneurs who are adopting these tools to identify and reach target audiences, and they are doing so with little if any encouragement from international donors. As such, it is perhaps not unreasonable to expect Romanian and Serbian political entrepreneurs, having lost out to competitors in previous elections, to similarly employ advanced voter outreach techniques, even in the absence of US party assistance aid. In these and similar environments, the demand for party development is becoming internalized and, as such, the need to supplement it with international aid may be diminishing. At the same time, providers of U.S. party assistance offering advice on such techniques can help ensure the quality of such advice and, more important, have the opportunity to try to introduce democratic norms and help level the playing field. The role of party assistance at this stage may be to ensure that such techniques are linked to other goals that parties may be less likely to pursue of their own accord.

This is not to say that by this stage parties will voluntarily adopt all the reforms desired by assistance providers. Greater focus on inclusion and internal democracy, for example, are less likely to be accepted by parties, since their connection to political and electoral success is less clear than other strategies, such as advanced voter outreach. To the extent such reforms have not been achieved, providers of assistance should focus on behavioral change by and within parties and on institutional reforms, such as reforms of the election system, that will further encourage behavioral change.

At some point, political party assistance must transition away from its early focus on election support and skills transfer. This change should occur earlier than it typically does at present. Election work provides the most dramatic rewards and its effects are easier to see than other kinds of party assistance, while work on internal party democracy, institution building or institutional reform is perhaps more amorphous and less attractive. This, however, provides the fundamental argument for why party assistance should shift focus towards the latter in subsequent stages of party development. As discussed above, parties are likely to recognize the inherent value in voter outreach, advanced campaign tactics and even platform development, and are less likely to need assistance to successfully adopt these practices. Implementers would do well to recognize when parties are starting to become self-sufficient in these areas and transition to strategies designed to focus on other areas or, in advanced cases, begin to phase out party assistance altogether.

### *Structural Variations and Assistance Strategies—Concluding Remarks*

As we note in our literature review, the few analyses of political party assistance that do exist, while providing valuable critiques of assistance strategies, offer few insights for how policy might be improved so as to more effectively meet the differing demands presented by varying political environments. The preceding discussion is an attempt to move beyond critique and toward providing the beginnings of a tool kit for conceptualizing and addressing the diverse challenges implementers must confront in varying settings. In semiauthoritarian settings, we suggest that political party assistance would do well to focus as much if not more on the process of elections as on the platforms and internal development of individual parties contesting elections. In contrast, in environments of post-election consolidation, where prodemocracy coalitions are fragmenting, we find that assistance strategies that target platform articulation and voter outreach are exactly what inchoate political parties need. Last, in young democracies that have previously held competitive elections, we find that political entrepreneurs are beginning to understand the value of voter outreach, platform development and other features of advanced parties. In these situations, while assistance can help parties do these things better, it should probably focus as well on reforms that parties are less likely to adopt entirely on their own initiative, such as in areas of internal democracy.

These prescriptions, we should note, emerge from a four-country sample. Importantly, though, these four countries are representative of a broader constellation of regimes in differing stages of political change and, as such, provide what we hope is a sound foundation for the further generation and refinement of party assistance strategies.

## **B. STRATEGIES**

This section discusses issues about strategies for political party assistance that emerged from the case studies and other experience and research. We discuss (1) the importance of understanding the real incentives of parties and politicians, (2) partisanship and the selection of partners, (3) winning elections and improving capacity as competing party assistance goals, (4) the use of polling and survey research, (5) the advantages and disadvantages of working at the local level, (6) the difficulties of integrating women and youth into political party assistance strategies, (7) the relationship of civil society assistance to party assistance, and (8) aid for party systems. In each case we identify issues or problems in these areas and consider best practices and potential areas for improvements.

### **Understanding Incentives of Parties and Politicians**

Political party assistance must be conceived and implemented in the face of entrenched beneficiaries, less-than-democratic governance structures, and distrustful civic views. In many countries, political party office holders have little incentive to focus on policy-making and governance. Members of parliament, for example, often owe their positions more to patronage-based relations with party leaders and government elites rather than to the electorate. Moreover, in countries with weak economies, party activists may see elected office and government service as an alternate path to wealth accumulation. And in countries marked by strong ethnic or religious divisions, parties may seek narrow in-

terests rather than the broader public good. Although election assistance helps parties and candidates pursue their own interests in elections, programs that focus on organizational training and exhort parties to virtuous paths, such as internal democracy and inclusiveness, sometimes do not show enough appreciation for whether such objectives are in the interests of those involved.

To be effective and sustainable, political party assistance should directly tackle the incentives of politicians, political parties and others with a stake in reform by helping them to understand how reform can work in their best interests. Programs often must motivate party leaders, government officials and others to change their behavior. But appeals to politicians to do the right thing or to act in the public interest cannot realistically be expected to trump politicians pursuing what they perceive to be their own interests. Fundamentally, assistance should try to create a link in the mind of politicians between the public interest and their own interests, namely, achieving electoral success or political power.

Work with local opinion leaders and civic groups, as under the Opening Politics by Acting Locally (OPAL) program in Romania, can help convince the public of its right to expect the parties to work in a democratic way and can help create demand for political reform, which in turn can help constrain abuses. Programs should address values, expectations and incentives in ways that will lead to greater transparency and integrity in governance and legislative functioning and more informed monitoring by stakeholders of governmental and legislative performance. Codes of ethics can help parties move from patronage-based to interest-based representation and combat corruption of individual party leaders. In Romania, for example, the Romanian Academic Society successfully lobbied parties to adopt a code of ethics for vetting candidates and party leaders. This NGO convinced parties that they would pay a political price if they failed to do so.

While watchdog organizations and the media in the United States focus on individual voting records, proposed legislation, and campaign finance, similar groups in emerging parliamentary democracies must identify and follow more relevant indicators, such as adherence to party platforms, the substance of “white papers” addressing policy issues, and the extent of participation of minority parties in governing coalitions. By increasing public awareness of party performance, these efforts demonstrate that the public will reward parties that act responsibly.

In sum, we suggest that, to be effective in convincing parties to take positive steps such as including women in party leadership, reaching out to minorities, adopting internal party democracy and supporting democratic reforms, programs must appeal to the self-interests of parties and their leaders and activists rather than exhorting them to do the right thing. When international actors advise institutional reforms because they are more democratic or fair or the right thing to do, for example, these seem like academic matters. Instead, advisors can argue that these changes have major political implications and try to demonstrate how changes can benefit parties, particularly if they are early adopters. A related hypothesis is that in some contexts, such as in many consolidating or more open democratic systems, those seeking to change the behavior of parties should consider program strategies to change incentives or encourage changes in behavior, such as working

with civil society organizations to increase pressure on parties from the “demand side.” However they achieve it, though, assistance programs should continue to look for ways to help politicians and legislators conceive of their role differently—as public representatives subject to the approval of the electorate.

### Partisanship and Selection of Partners

Party aid providers necessarily have to make choices about which parties to work with. Historically, USAID has urged transparent, inclusive eligibility criteria for participation in party programs, and, as discussed above, USAID’s *Political Party Assistance Policy* prohibits assistance to “nondemocratic parties.”<sup>71</sup> Implementation Guidance for the policy suggests “key indicators of a party’s democratic credentials” include (1) “support for peaceful, democratic means to obtain power,” (2) “respect for human rights and the rule of law,” and (3) “respect for freedom of religion, press, speech, and association.”<sup>72</sup> But it acknowledges that, where there are a large number of parties, it may not be “practical or cost-effective” to provide assistance to them all.<sup>73</sup>

Judgments about whether parties are “democratic” or “significant” often fall into gray areas and are sometimes a matter of disagreement between USAID and the party institutes. The Implementation Guidance does not offer further instruction on how to make these judgments or how to balance particular parties’ stated commitments (rhetoric) and actions. The policy does permit waivers to allow work with parties that would otherwise be deemed “undemocratic,” though USAID and the U.S. party institutes do not, and should not, work with extremist or violent parties. Moreover, such parties may not want U.S. assistance or to engage with U.S. groups. It can, however, be difficult to determine where to draw the line, and an overly strict interpretation of this policy can be counterproductive in some environments. Arguably, relationships with as broad a spectrum of parties as possible, consistent with USAID policy and good judgment, could help reinforce the spread of democratic norms.

The decision to withhold assistance from certain parties has at times excluded parties that have political or electoral significance. In the January 2007 Serbian parliamentary elections, for example, nearly 29 percent of the population supported the Radicals, a party that has not received political party assistance from Western donors. U.S. party assistance understandably has not aided the Radical party because it appeals to extreme nationalism in a postconflict society and has strong antidemocratic tendencies.

Still, there are distinct drawbacks to interpreting this policy too narrowly. For one, only providing assistance to selected parties runs the risk of creating too much of a focus on electoral strategy and campaigning. As discussed below, supporting a subset of parties can encourage an “us versus them” mentality that puts a premium on electoral victory for

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<sup>71</sup> U.S. Agency for International Development, *USAID Political Party Assistance Policy*, PD-ABY-359 (September 2003), p. 1.

<sup>72</sup> U.S. Agency for International Development, *USAID Political Party Assistance Policy Implementation Guidance*, PD-ABY-359 (September 2003).

<sup>73</sup> *USAID Political Party Assistance Policy Implementation Guidance*.



the local partners and may shift some focus away from improvements in governance and organization that are crucial for long-term party viability and broader democratization.

There is also the possibility that parties receiving support will lose elections, notwithstanding such assistance. As IRI points out in its study of center-right parties in Central Europe, there is no guarantee that parties receiving American support will stay in power, even if they are genuinely democratic and make good-faith efforts to govern effectively. In such situations USAID may find that opportunities for party assistance with the new party in power are closed off.

If the goals are to build parties as organizations and reinforce democratic norms, decision makers should try to construe limits to engagement narrowly. If party-assistance organizations are working with all major parties in a country, which should be the norm under current U.S. government policy, then the danger of undue focus on electoral success tends to fade away. If USAID and the party institutes choose to work with only a subset of parties, then there is a greater tendency to focus on short-term election-related projects and to define objectives in electoral terms.

Restricting party assistance to overtly democratic parties rests on the false assumption that party members—and for that matter, political parties themselves—are unchanging. Party activists, however, particularly in post-communist countries, often change party affiliation and entire political parties may revise their platforms. In these environments, party affiliations and platforms are as much instrumental as they are substantive. Thus, Aleksander Kwasniewski, Poland's twice-elected president and himself a former member of the Communist Party, notes of his former Communist Party colleagues: "I've seen very few Communists . . . [but] I met a lot of technocrats [and] opportunists." Similarly, overtly democratic parties and elites may become illiberal over time. Askar Akaev, Kyrgyzstan's recently ousted president, successfully portrayed himself in the early 1990s as the Thomas Jefferson of Central Asia. By the late 1990s, however, it was clear that, rhetoric aside, Akaev would not prove to be the founding father of Kyrgyz democracy.

Some level of engagement, even with parties with somewhat questionable commitment to all tenets of democracy, might help to expose them to democratic norms and push them to some modicum of reform. It may be possible to engage with nondemocratic parties without providing them direct assistance, such as in local governance programs or in discussions of policy or institutional reforms. This approach could help spread democratic norms within arguably nondemocratic parties and build relationships with potential reformers within those parties without supporting their objectionable policies or platforms.

In short, providing or withholding assistance based on judgments about the democratic credentials of parties risks alienating seemingly illiberal elites and parties that, provided the right incentives, might eventually find it in their interest to pursue reforms. And it risks wasting resources on seemingly liberal elites and parties that, under changed conditions, subsequently prove autocratic and retrograde. This latter possibility, though unfortunate, is tolerable. The earlier possibility—refusing assistance to political parties that may initially fail to meet Western expectations of democracy but that may nevertheless hold potential for reform—is considerably more problematic and should be avoided.



USAID and the party institutes should continue to work toward consensus on the selection of partners in accordance with USAID and institute policy. Working with a democratic opposition to challenge an entrenched authoritarian regime is defensible. But in less clear cut situations, recognizing the existence of USAID's policy, the standards for inclusion should be interpreted broadly.

### **Competing Party Assistance Goals: Contesting Elections vs. Improving Capacity**

Within the U.S. government and within and between the party institutes there can be different views about the goals of political party assistance programs. Some within the U.S. government and some implementers implicitly, if not explicitly, see electoral success and political influence for recipient parties as the objective of party assistance programs, although most would agree that assistance should focus on improving party capacity to represent and aggregate interests. This question of objectives is fundamental to any analysis of political party assistance.

As discussed above, USAID policy states that party assistance should be neutral and should “not seek to determine election outcomes.”<sup>74</sup> This is intended to ensure that party programs are focused on long-term development as well as to avoid inappropriate interference in the electoral politics of other countries in violation of norms of political sovereignty. Thus, election assistance should be a means to end—a method of building popular support, connecting parties to constituents and refining their policy messages, with the ultimate goal of producing a system with internally democratic, representative parties.

In some situations, however, electoral competitiveness has been an important, logical short-term goal, and, as discussed above, DI sees value in emphasizing electoral assistance in certain contexts. In Serbia in the late 1990s, USAID and the party institutes provided assistance for voter outreach and other campaign fundamentals only to the opposition, with the hope of promoting regime change or at least a more competitive political environment. This strategy was rewarded with Milosevic's removal from power in 2000, and, although Western assistance was only one factor among many, this period in Serbia is widely considered one of the great success stories of political party assistance and democracy assistance more generally.

There is a danger, however, in using elections as the standard for success in party assistance. In Serbia, programs have focused on training to improve electoral competitiveness at the expense of broader organizational and governance goals. The party institutes recognize this, yet they stress that the frequency of elections in Serbia has required a near-continuous focus on election-related tools and skills, particularly given that nondemocratic parties maintain a significant base of support among the electorate. Because the U.S. government's priority evidently has been to impede revanchist parties, USAID and the U.S. embassy have encouraged the party institutes to focus on elections and work with democratic parties. The institutes lament that with the prodemocratic parties on a near-constant election footing, and with party assistance providers having a vested interest in supporting them, there are few resources to devote to other program areas.

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<sup>74</sup> USAID *Political Party Assistance Policy*, p. 1.

A corollary of this is that parties in Serbia and elsewhere are far more interested in the kinds of concrete election assistance being provided. The voter database developed by NDI and CeSID, the national election monitoring and democracy advocacy organization, for example, is the type of support that any party around the world would leap at, including many in advanced democracies. Improvements in governance or internal party democracy, while crucial for long-term democratization, do not offer the same short-term appeal to a competitive, self-interested party. Unfortunately, the interest of parties in election assistance encourages providers to pursue electoral goals.

A side effect of this focus on elections is that it creates a specific measure of success that may not be most relevant to broader party assistance goals. Assistance providers wanted to develop the ability of opposition parties to compete against Milosevic. The strategies developed to do so included the standard campaign tactics that parties in Western countries are familiar with and, in general, good at. These are probably the most straightforward tasks in party assistance. Overcoming the Milosevic regime was an impressive achievement, but the success of that movement marked only a first step in the democratization process. An excessive focus on election assistance to parties in a more typical context, such as Serbia today, may distract from more difficult and fundamental goals that remain to be achieved. Problematically, with antidemocratic elements occupying such a large swath of the Serbian political spectrum, electoral assistance at the expense of organizational and governance programs may hamper the further development of the democratic parties and the eventual marginalization of the others.

If the ultimate goal of party assistance is encouraging the creation of a viable party system with multiple democratically oriented, popularly supported parties, a strategy that overemphasizes elections risks creating a situation in which the goal of electoral victory for one side outweighs the broader goal of providing the electorate with meaningful choice and representation. USAID policy reflects this conclusion, but the tendency in some circumstances to work nevertheless with only certain parts of the political spectrum and the policy's prohibition on support for nondemocratic parties, in practice, have meant that the goal of broad inclusion is not always met. Where major parties are judged nondemocratic, work with democratic parties in an electoral context may effectively be taking sides. This may be entirely appropriate in some circumstances, such as when democratic forces are struggling against entrenched authoritarian regimes, but judgments about which parties with whom to work sometimes remain difficult. In situations where election assistance is considered a priority, such as under the semiauthoritarian regimes discussed above, policy-makers and assistance providers should avoid measuring the success of election-related programs based on electoral outcomes. Rather, they should try to measure the extent of "knowledge transfer," that is, whether targeted parties attempt to apply new tactics or substantially change the way they operate in pursuing their own interests. In general, while elections certainly are key tests for parties, the purpose of election-related party assistance should be to build strong political party organizations, not to help particular parties in particular elections.

## Public Opinion Research

Both U.S. party institutes have focused a great deal of attention on the tactic of survey research in their political party assistance programs. IRI has developed public opinion survey research as a major specialty, typically a significant part of its programming. NDI likewise has conducted or sponsored opinion surveys in a number of countries and has often conducted qualitative, focus-group research as well. These efforts have made contributions to party development, but they also have potential drawbacks and have at times been overemphasized.

IRI has sponsored public opinion polling in each of the case-study countries and has made its polls available to political party leaders as a basis for strategic planning. Similarly, in Serbia NDI has aided CeSID to conduct national polling. With assistance from NDI, CeSID has also established a database of local election results and census data that parties have used to target voter outreach. The database has also informed sampling and questionnaire design for opinion research surveys. This has been well received and, with some caveats discussed below, could be a model for future projects.

Polling is helpful in that it provides a snapshot of underlying public opinion. When executed properly, survey research can contribute to party development. Quantitative analysis helps assess public knowledge and attitudes about policy issues, democratic institutions and processes as well as gauge levels of support for particular parties or candidates. Surveys can also help identify and specify the special advantages and challenges political parties may face. Polls, moreover, can provide a statistically reliable measure of how aware or receptive different segments of the population are to party messages or to information provided in DG programs. By encouraging attention to survey research, party assistance programs demonstrate the importance of what the public thinks and the value of reaching out to the public.

Structured focus groups can elicit a range of ideas, attitudes, experiences and opinions held by a selected small sample of respondents on a defined topic. In closed, semiauthoritarian or postconflict societies, focus groups can be a valuable tool for understanding beneath-the-surface complexities and attitudes that cannot be easily measured. They cannot be the basis, however, for measuring opinion and cannot substitute for opinion polls based on statistically significant samples.

The focus on public opinion polling has had many positive effects and has been appreciated by many parties in the region. Polling provides important input into the development of party platforms and campaign strategy. Party activists and members of parliament in Kyrgyzstan, for example, have credited public opinion surveys sponsored by IRI with encouraging parties to design platforms responsive to broad public opinion and helping them to design electoral strategies, identify and get out voters, and forecast election results. Even though many academic researchers in the region had previous experience with conducting and interpreting survey research, the attention to polling has helped establish survey research as a democratic norm and has focused attention on the importance of public opinion in a democracy. The institutes have directly supported the development of political party polling capacity through training and working with parties to plan and

design such surveys. Moreover, the party institutes generally work with local partners, providing these local research organizations and firms the ancillary benefit of training and enhancement of their capacity to conduct and interpret opinion surveys.

At the same time, there are several potential concerns with this focus on survey research. First, survey research depends on adherence to strict methodological standards to ensure the validity and reliability of the data. Implementers need to oversee all aspects of the research, analysis and presentations based on the research, but this requires considerable time and sophistication.

Second, there is a question whether some countries have institutions competent not only to conduct sound research but also to interpret it. As one polling expert put it after working in an emerging democracy:

Opinion polling, a product of mature democracies and market economies, has parachuted into an emerging economy and democracy, which certainly does not have the communications infrastructure to support it, may not have the institutional independence necessary to manage it, and with few exceptions does not have the critical facility within the media and universities to place the results in perspective.<sup>75</sup>

This assessment applies to many countries in Europe and Eurasia. The lack of sophistication in interpreting polling results has certainly been seen with regard to exit polls, as in Azerbaijan in 2005. Thus, while supporting survey research can help to build capacity and increase the level of sophistication with regard to polling, implementers should be aware of these limitations.

There is some debate about whether and when the results of survey research should be publicly released and the extent to which the larger public can understand the nuances of survey results. Some local analysts themselves have made the argument that the larger public is often prone to misunderstanding polling results. In some instances, the party institutes prefer to share polling results only with particular parties, but the parties or funders may want to share them more widely. Others in the political party assistance community prefer to make all polls public to encourage transparency and facilitate communication between politicians and the public.

Although understanding of polling may be improving in many countries, it still has not reached the point where the media, political parties and the public can easily interpret polling results. Ironically, though, as parties get more sophisticated they will also need less assistance in funding and implementing survey research.

Third, despite the common view that party programs need to pay greater attention to issues of governance, emphasis on survey research can reinforce and exacerbate the tendency for such programs to focus on elections, even when such research is conducted in nonelection years. This is true despite the significant efforts of USAID and implementers

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<sup>75</sup> J. David Kenamer, "The Polling Business: Argentina: Polling in an Emerging Democracy," *The Public Perspective* 6 (October/November 1995), p. 62.

to focus polls on issues and deemphasize questions about voter attitudes toward particular parties, candidates and public officials.

Fourth, it is important that survey research sponsored in the context of party assistance programs serves a development purpose rather than being weighed down by attempts to obtain information for the use of foreign organizations and governments for other analytical and foreign-policy purposes. The principal audience for such polls in the context of party assistance should be domestic ones, and the principal purposes should be to demonstrate the importance of public opinion to parties and to help build necessary skills for conducting and interpreting polls. Even though the two objectives are not mutually exclusive, polling in the context of party assistance programs should be conceived as a means of contributing to party development rather than be used to provide information on public attitudes or election preferences to foreign diplomats, governments or others in the international community. Although the party institutes do conceive their survey research as supporting party development, as discussed above, they sometimes do not make polling results public or broadly available, which can leave the impression that the polls are being used for some other purpose. And in some countries polling has been used principally to provide information to sponsoring governments rather than to domestic political parties. This is particularly dangerous if domestic audiences perceive research as a means of supporting the gathering of information for foreigners, a form of intelligence gathering, rather than as a sincere attempt to provide democratic assistance.

Ultimately, survey research can contribute to party development and to the electoral performance of democratic parties. Survey research, however, is a tactic rather than a broad strategy and its limitations should be acknowledged. Party assistance providers should be judicious about the use of public opinion polling and should keep in mind the goal of party (and democratic) development. The main objectives should be the transfer of skills and norms, such as convincing party clients of the value of listening to the views of their supporters and the larger public. Most important, assistance providers should continue to ensure the impartiality, integrity and technical competence of their local partners and consultants.

### **Center versus Regions**

Experience from several of the case-study countries raises questions about the relative emphasis of political party assistance at the center or national level as compared to the local level, in regions and cities away from the capitals and national party headquarters. A comparison of the cases suggests that shifting program focus to the regional or local level can have a significant positive impact on party development.

In Romania there has been a conscious effort to move political party programming from the capital to the regions. In the early part of the decade, Romania was experiencing a political drag on its democratic transition and the political environment was closing. The ruling party was too strong, and pressures upon independent media and civil society, among other problems, gave rise to concerns of a political class that had significantly strayed from democratic principles.

Romania's major political parties, in government and opposition, were not meaningfully involved in local affairs. Party branches existed but functioned only around campaign time. There was little in the way of non-election-related outreach to citizens, in the form of issue advocacy, policy reform or community development. Likewise, there was little engagement with local civic groups on shared issues of concern and few if any instances of structured communication within branches among local membership.

The 2001 Romania DG assessment for USAID concluded that the national political environment was not ripe for engagement and that a focus on the local level, including assistance to local party organizations, could in turn stimulate demand for reform at the national level. Thus, USAID initiated, and NDI and IRI implemented, the Opening Politics by Acting Locally (OPAL) project with the goal of engaging local civil society organizations and political parties to increase political participation and promote political reforms and to strengthen representation and accountability.

In Milosevic-era Serbia in the years leading up to the 2000 elections, political party assistance programs also moved to the local level to avoid repression at the national level and to build a national network that could challenge the authoritarian government. Milosevic's authoritarian control had stifled the national political environment, denying opposition parties and the party institutes the space to operate in national politics. Milosevic's control of the media exacerbated this problem and encouraged party-assistance providers to shift their focus to local organizing.

In Kyrgyzstan, in contrast, although the party institutes seek to strengthen links between the center and the regions, their focus remains centered in the capital, Bishkek. Regional party representatives from Jalal Abad and Osh, though they knew of NDI and IRI's work and in some cases had participated in the institutes' training sessions, lamented that regional training sessions were infrequent and that such sessions were dominated by participants hand-picked by local administrators.

The party institutes do recognize that more work in the regions is desirable. In Kyrgyzstan, and even in Romania despite the explicit local focus of the OPAL project, they attribute their inability to work more beyond the capital to a lack of funding.

Democracy International's field research in the regions suggests that, although well-designed party programs can create a constituency for reform at the national level, training party activists in the center does not necessarily trickle down to their counterparts at the local level. If party assistance is going to be active at the local level, providers will likely need to work more beyond the capital. Even though programs should be coordinated with national party headquarters, as USAID and implementers understand, a considerably more sustained presence in the regions is essential if democracy assistance is to succeed in building grassroots constituencies for political parties outside the capital. This may be particularly true in closed political environments where nondemocratic forces dominate centers of power. It may also apply in countries where the political elite is highly concentrated but population is more broadly dispersed or where communication between the center and the regions is poor.



## **Integrating Women and Youth Politics in Political Party Assistance Strategies**

Increasing women and youth representation is a central goal of many political party assistance strategies. Women, and issues of particular concern to women, are underrepresented in political parties and government institutions in most if not all of the countries receiving political party assistance in Europe and Eurasia. Minorities confront similar barriers to effective participation. And many believe that involving and building the capacity of young party leaders is a way to increase the orientation of parties toward reform.

But, while gender and youth initiatives in party assistance are normatively laudable, they seem unlikely to succeed, at least initially, in many political environments unless parties see such initiatives as being in their own self-interest. Most parties will not focus on including women candidates and appealing to women's interests unless they think they gain some advantage from doing so. In the meantime, such programs run the risk of diverting attention from the more fundamental needs of building ideologically coherent, organizationally capable political parties. This in of itself is not justification for abandoning youth and gender-focused political party assistance strategies, nor is it an argument that the interests of women and youth (and minorities) should not be of central concern to assistance providers. Given sufficient resources, an emphasis on youth and gender inclusiveness concomitant with a focus on fundamentals of party capacity building and strengthening probably can contribute to broadened political representation of important constituencies in the long run. But resources are limited. Moreover, in the near term, women and youth are often perceived to be at the margins of what is really important to many parties and their leaders, and without an attempt to change that perception a focus on such efforts tends to make party programs marginal as well.

Democracy International's findings on political party development parallel those of social mobilization theory more broadly. More specifically, just as students of social mobilization like Sidney Tarrow, Margaret Keck and Kathryn Sikkink find that those social movements that succeed in attracting broad followings are ones with clearly defined and readily understandable ideologies, so too did DI find in Romania, Serbia, Georgia and Kyrgyzstan that parties that were best able to mobilize support were those that developed clear and widely understood party platforms. Directly stated, parties with the broadest, most inclusive support tend to be parties that first and foremost have clearly articulated ideologies and positions and not necessarily parties that seek greater youth and women representation.

Party assistance implementers and advisors may be able to help hierarchical, male-dominated political elites to recognize their incentives to reach out to marginalized social groups, including women, minorities and young people. In countries such as Romania and, to a somewhat lesser degree, Serbia, where political parties have begun to articulate clear ideologies, stressing the normative and strategic value of women and youth participation to a male-dominated party elite may indeed encourage greater party inclusiveness and more equitable representation. Parties that take on issues of concern to women, for example, may find additional support at the polls. In Kyrgyzstan and elsewhere, though, where many parties function as self-promotion vehicles for a narrow political elite and



where mobilizing political support is accomplished through patronage politics rather than through ideological affiliation, gender and youth assistance strategies are likely to have less resonance.

Achieving equitable political representation, though again normatively good, rarely inspires social mobilization. Indeed, as Keck and Sikkink note of an earlier attempt to secure women's equitable economic representation, USAID's 1973 creation of the Women and Development Bureau: "its demands are important but prosaic . . . [and the] concerns were so systemic that they defied individual or group efforts to effect change."<sup>76</sup> In short, women and youth inequalities, though widely recognized as a problem—or perhaps precisely because they are so widely recognized as a problem—rarely inspire activism. Importantly, though, not all gender-equality movements fail; and understanding why some movements succeed may provide instructive insights both for USAID's political party assistance programs and USAID's broader goal of furthering gender and youth equality.

In contrast to the, at best, passively supported "women and development" movement, the campaign against violence against women has proven widely successful. The reason some movements succeed in drawing a broad base of supporters—and, more broadly, the reason any mobilization based organization succeeds in drawing a broad base of supporters—is that they clearly articulate compelling and readily understood platforms.<sup>77</sup> The underrepresentation of women and youth in political parties in countries like Kyrgyzstan is not an affront to the core understandings of human dignity because political parties in these countries, unfortunately, are largely devoid of ideology and meaning. Until political leaders address this shortcoming, until parties are made meaningful, the question of increased mobilization of women and youth within parties will remain peripheral. As such, in inchoate or nonexistent party systems as in Kyrgyzstan, the best strategy for furthering equal representation is to first assist platform articulation so that political parties become organizations women and youth find worthy of supporting.

### **The Relationship between Civil Society and Political Party Assistance**

Although often treated by donor agencies as programmatically distinct, civil society development and political party development are closely interrelated. However, neither donor agencies nor implementing partners fully understand, or at least fully articulate, the nature of this relationship. Thus, for example, while USAID and the party institutes actively encourage cooperation between political parties and election-monitoring organizations, other productive relationships between civil society groups and political parties are largely ignored in party assistance programs. More specifically, we identify four civil society-political party relationships that, rather than being treated as analytically distinct

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<sup>76</sup> Margaret E. Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, *Activists beyond Borders*, (Cornell University Press, 1998), p. 171.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 171-73. For example, whereas one may agree with but might not be moved to campaign for women's rights to equal economic opportunities, it is more difficult for most people to remain passive when confronted with the ills of sexual slavery or violence against women, that is, when one is confronted with concrete practices that violate "the core of understandings human dignity." *Ibid.*, p. 172.

targets for assistance, might best be advanced through a more consciously integrated civil society/party assistance strategy:<sup>78</sup>

- 1) ***Party Watchdog***: Civil society organizations defend against the manipulation of and corruption within political parties.
- 2) ***Leadership Training***: Civil society organizations provide leadership, organizational and analytical skills which activists can use should they wish to become party activists.
- 3) ***Interest Aggregation and Representation***: Civil society organizations may better aggregate and represent grassroots demands for reform than inchoate parties still weighted by hierarchical patterns of patronage politics.
- 4) ***Capacity Building***: Civil society organizations devoted to issue advancement provide expertise that parties and party elites, preoccupied by furthering personal power, often cannot.

At the same time, we should also note the civil society-political party relationship can also contribute to illiberal political change. Of particular concern are the following two potential dynamics:

- 1) ***Illiberal Interest Aggregation and Representation***: In cases where xenophobic or otherwise divisive ideologies emerge, civil society's associationalism-enhancing qualities can accelerate rather than dampen illiberal political change.
- 2) ***Politicization of what should be nonpartisan public goods***: In cases where civil society organizations, such as election-monitoring groups, demonstrate partisan bias, the pursuit of broader, universal values such as free and fair elections is jeopardized.

It is these last two dynamics, the potential for civil society to accelerate rather than dampen divisive ideologies and to politicize what be best left as nonpartisan public goods, that understandably make international donors leery of closely linking civil society and political party programs. In Georgia and Kyrgyzstan, for example, ostensibly neutral election-monitoring organizations are widely perceived as either pro-government or pro-opposition, even though these perceptions are not necessarily fair. And in neighboring Uzbekistan and Russia, government-sponsored organizations that purport to be CSOs, most notably youth groups, are proving critical institutions for fueling state sponsored ethno-nationalist ideologies.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> We focus principally on CSOs involved in political advocacy or organization because these are the kinds of organizations that have the most potential to affect political party development.

<sup>79</sup> On the role youth groups play in assisting the Putin government's Russian-nationalist ideology, see Douglas W. Blum, "Russian Youth Policy: Shaping the Nation-State's Future," *SAIS Review*, vol XXVI, no. 2, (Summer-Fall 2006). For more on youth groups in Uzbekistan, see McGlinchey, "Regeneration or

As these examples illustrate, the reformist potential of civil society-political party relations rests on a paradox: if civil society is to protect against illiberal politics and to promote competitive, multiparty democracy, civic organizations must make all reasonable efforts to remain objective and nonpartisan. Multiparty democracy benefits from—and democracy assistance strategies are wise to promote—organizations that can serve as watchdogs against corruption, that can represent and articulate social interests, and that can improve the capacity of parties by making available qualified experts. To achieve this productive and liberalizing relationship, however, party assistance strategies must not only embrace work with civic organizations, they must actively assist civic organizations capable of acting as honest brokers in struggles against the incompetence, corruption and abuses of power that so often define transitional political systems.

### Party System Aid

Political party assistance has primarily consisted of programs that work directly with political parties, individually or collectively. At times, the party institutes and other assistance providers have also worked to improve a country's party system. As Carothers notes, "it is a natural evolution of political party assistance to expand from trying to help individual parties to strengthen party systems overall."<sup>80</sup> Such efforts, aimed at attempting to reform the legal framework under which parties operate, have sometimes yielded successes and can be productive even in seemingly inhospitable environments.

Among the case-study countries, Kyrgyzstan was the most prominent example of this type of assistance. Kyrgyzstan's broader political environment itself remains the greatest constraint on Kyrgyz political parties' ability to contest elections. Until recently, Kyrgyzstan's executive-centered political system left little room for either the parliament or political parties. Importantly, though, the March 2005 change in Kyrgyz leadership opened new possibilities for political participation, and both party institutes rapidly responded and deepened their assistance to government elites, political party leaders and civil society activists oriented toward constitutional reform.<sup>81</sup> IRI in particular devoted considerable resources both to bringing together critical and often opposed political and civil society actors and to comparing the relative merits of presidential and parliamentary systems. The November 2006 constitutional amendments, many of which were first drafted during roundtables supported by NDI, IRI and IFES, promised a real shift away from executive control, the growth of true parliamentary powers and new incentives for political elites to form coherent and strong parties.

At the institutional level, this analysis and, indeed, the party institutes' admirably flexible reaction to the March 2005 political opening in Kyrgyzstan, demonstrates that attention and assistance to reforming formal institutions and constitutional design can lay the foundations for future political party growth. IRI and NDI party assistance helped create a constituency for constitutional reform, a constituency that ultimately secured party list

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Degeneration? Youth Mobilization and the Future of Uzbek Politics," Stanford CDDRL Working Paper Number 63, June 2006.

<sup>80</sup> Carothers, *Weakest Link*, p. 210.

<sup>81</sup> For a comprehensive overview of these efforts, see CEPPS/IRI Quarterly Report: April – June 2006 and CEPPS/NDI Quarterly Report: July 1 to September 30, 2006.

voting for future Kyrgyz parliaments. This change in how parliaments are elected promises to provide new incentives for future political party growth.

Unfortunately, the case of Kyrgyzstan also shows that making changes to the party system endure is more difficult than instituting them in the first place. The November 2006 amendments to the constitution have since been revised, and the executive has regained many of the powers it ceded in November. Importantly, though, the provision to elect 50 percent of parliamentary seats through proportional representation remains and should provide marginal improvements to the party system overall. This move from an entirely majoritarian system to a mixed system will provide incentives for political party formation.

While party system reform is often directed at institutions such as election management bodies, government authorities, legislatures and nongovernmental organizations, rather than directly to parties, parties can play important, even vital, roles in bringing it about. Often reforms cannot be enacted without parties' assent, for their interests will be directly affected. Although not all systems may be ripe for this type of assistance, providers can work with parties to help them identify their interests and build political support for needed reforms.

### **C. AGENCY/IMPLEMENTATION**

This section offers findings about the management and implementation of party assistance. This includes consideration of (1) program management and competing institutional interests, (2) program scope and competition, and (3) establishing democratic norms.

#### **Program Management and Competing Institutional Interests**

The quality of working relationships among the embassy, USAID mission, party institutes and other donors can affect the quality of party assistance outcomes. These actors sometimes have competing institutional interests. Within the U.S. government and between the U.S. government and the institutes, differences of perspective and opinion can cause tensions could potentially detract from the effectiveness of assistance programs. They can also foster a healthy and dynamic discussion of important, substantive issues.

In some countries USAID and the party institutes sometimes disagree on priorities, budgets, strategies and tactics. In Romania the institutes commend USAID but question the U.S. government's decision to phase out programs now that the country has joined the European Union and will have "graduated" from the need for U.S. assistance. They also argue that budgets for their current programs are too low and suggest they may seek alternative sources of funding to maintain their programs after USAID has left, such as by using their "core funds" from NED.

These disagreements stem largely from institutional causes. IRI and NDI are independent, nonprofit 501(c)(3) organizations. They also enjoy the support of constituencies within the Republican and Democratic parties, and their informal relationships with the

political parties make them influential actors within the American foreign assistance community. They highly value their independence and the established, practical expertise they have developed. The institutes hold that their standing as NGOs separate from the U.S. government is important to political party assistance, since, they argue, it protects the USG from accusations of direct interference in the politics of host countries, lessening a potential complication in the USG's bilateral relationships with host-country governments.

The State Department-USAID relationship is also important to political party assistance. Greater State Department involvement in foreign assistance carries implications not only for broad policy goals, but also for strategic and tactical decisions. There are possible differences between short-term diplomatic goals and longer-term development goals that can affect assistance programs. In such areas, USAID's institutional knowledge and experience should be key resources in making decisions, whatever form the process takes.

The party institutes should be encouraged to perform more intensive and rigorous monitoring and evaluation of their own work, or allow it from outside sources. As discussed in the literature review, both NDI and IRI have undertaken studies with USAID funding designed to bolster the state of knowledge on party development and spread lessons learned from their own experience. They have also assisted Thomas Carothers with his research into the subject and have generally cooperated with the current study. Further broad study of party assistance and other political development program impacts and challenges should also be encouraged.

### **Program Scope and Competition**

The party institutes work in other areas in addition to political party assistance. Accordingly, party assistance programs are not always clearly separated from civil society, civic education, monitoring, legislative, and other democracy and governance programs. Accordingly, when the team asked about party assistance programs in the case-study countries, institute representatives often discussed civil society and other programs as well.

Within the political party assistance field, as traditionally defined, both institutes often conduct a full range of programs in most countries. Thus, in each of the case-study countries, both institutes have worked on programs in each of the three broad categories of party assistance programs: election/campaign-related, organizational capacity-building and governance. According to the detailed information provided by NDI about its programs in Europe and Eurasia, NDI has covered a broad range of issues in almost every country in which it has worked. (See Appendix E.)

Although there are some differences in emphasis and style between the institutes, their approaches and program tactics are largely similar. The institutes work in most of the same countries in the region, including most of the countries with U.S. assistance programs. The IRI and NDI programs often sound similar, as they often work in the same sphere, although USAID and the party institutes have worked together to try to establish a clearer division of responsibilities by functional area or geography.

With one or two exceptions, European party foundations do not play a prominent role in party development. They operate in many countries in the region, but most of them have emerged only in very recent years and operate with tiny budgets, and even the older, well-funded German party foundations during the 1990s moved largely away from party work (in favor of work with civil society organizations, think-tanks, academic institutions and civic education efforts) in much of the world. As discussed above, European parties and international party groupings based in Europe aid fraternal parties in the region, often in collaboration with the U.S. party institutes.

There are other sources of assistance to parties in the region. Nondemocratic and nationalist parties in several countries are receiving outside assistance from other governments, albeit without the transparency necessary for the public or the international community to assess the nature of such relationships. The team heard, for example, about such assistance to the Labor Party in Georgia, the Sodruzhestvo (Accord) party in Kyrgyzstan, and the Radicals and Socialists in Serbia.

The team also heard in several countries that parties in the region increasingly are receiving assistance from paid political consultants, including advice on electoral strategy. This includes parties that receive U.S. government-supported assistance, such as the Democratic Party of Albania, as well as parties regarded with more suspicion in the West, such as the Party of Regions of Ukraine. Such private consulting is offered for a more narrow purpose and is more oriented to election tactics and other short-term considerations than is U.S. government-funded party assistance, which is more focused on longer-term party-building. Nevertheless, it is notable that political parties in emerging democracies, even where political party aid is available for free, are often still willing to pay for such services, at least in the context of elections.

Once parties can afford to hire outside political consultants, the U.S. government should consider whether to continue to provide them assistance, although by itself the use of consultants would not be determinative. At the very least, the work of others in the sector, including private sources, may require USAID and the party institutes to be more creative and to adapt their programs if parties are still going to seek their assistance.<sup>82</sup> But this must be done without bowing to the temptation to serve as *de facto* political consultants on election strategies.

### **Establishing Democratic Norms**

Criticisms of party assistance programs risk overlooking one of their less tangible, more fundamental benefits. Perhaps the single greatest value added of political party programs is the opportunity to build relationships with local parties and political elites that can reinforce important democratic norms. Even if structural constraints are difficult to overcome, or if resources are not sufficient to initiate a sweeping democratic transition, assistance to political parties can encourage the socialization of democratic norms and the acceptance of basic democratic values in societies where they are not yet internalized.

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<sup>82</sup> It should be noted that European programs, because of their party-to-party approach, can be complementary to the U.S. approach in this sphere.



It is possible that this benefit is most acutely felt in countries without previous democratic traditions. Of the four case study countries, Kyrgyzstan has the shortest and least developed history of democratic institutions. It is also probably the country with the most significant structural constraints on political party development. Given these circumstances, however, it might also be the most likely to benefit simply from the existence of party programs and the socializing, norm-building effects they bring.

Furthermore, maintaining a presence in a country allows assistance providers to seize unexpected opportunities for democratic reform when they present themselves. In Romania, for example, starting in 2002 USAID and the party institutes shifted their focus from the national to the local level, based on the assessment that the national political environment was not receptive to real reform at that time. In 2004, however, elections swept the opposition into government at the national level, which represented an opportunity for Romania to get its democratic transition back on track and a chance for assistance providers to redirect the focus back toward national issues and institutions.

Kyrgyzstan provides a more significant example. Until recently, Kyrgyzstan's executive-centered political system left little room for work with either the parliament or political parties. Importantly, though, the March 2005 change in Kyrgyz leadership opened new possibilities for political participation, and both party institutes rapidly responded by deepening their assistance to government elites, political party leaders and civil society activists oriented toward constitutional reform.<sup>83</sup> They brought together critical and often opposed political and civil society actors and to explaining through comprehensive yet understandable methods the merits of presidential versus parliamentary systems. By being in a position to take advantage of this unique opportunity, the party institutes played a major role in bringing about the constitutional reforms eventually passed in November 2006.

Many of those reforms have since been revised and rescinded, showing how difficult it can be to support sustainable reform in such an environment. Importantly, though, Kyrgyzstan's current inhospitable political environment may hide what may ultimately prove to be substantive achievements of party assistance. More specifically, current collaboration with and assistance to party activists stands the real prospect of yielding as yet unrealized dividends when and if liberal constitutional reform is successfully and permanently implemented.

The suggestion that political party assistance can make lasting, positive contributions merely by the presence of providers is not to excuse ineffective programs or to obviate the need for rigorous critiques of current programs and efforts to improve on current weaknesses. Rather, it argues for maintaining assistance to parties even in the face of daunting structural constraints.

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<sup>83</sup> For a comprehensive overview of these efforts, see CEPPS/IRI Quarterly Report: April – June 2006 and CEPPS/NDI Quarterly Report: July 1 to September 30, 2006.



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#### IV. RECOMMENDATIONS: BEST PRACTICES AND POLICIES FOR RECONSIDERATION

Below we summarize best practices and policy recommendations that follow from the preceding findings section. Our discussion highlights policy recommendations that diverge from current political party assistance strategies as practiced in the four case studies analyzed in the report. It also identifies policy successes from the four case studies and suggests modifications that may improve assistance outcomes.

- The defining role of **structural and environmental constraints**, though acknowledged by both USAID and the party institutes, is imperfectly reflected in the designs of political party assistance in individual countries. We consider three different types of political environments in which the U.S. government supports political party assistance: (1) semiauthoritarian regimes initiating potentially competitive elections; (2) inchoate democracies attempting postelection consolidation, often after a transitional election has taken place; and (3) young democracies moving toward third and fourth round competitive elections. In semiauthoritarian settings, we suggest that political party assistance would do well to focus as much on the process of elections as on the platforms and internal development of individual parties contesting elections. In contrast, in environments of postelection consolidation, where prodemocracy coalitions are fragmenting, we find that assistance strategies that target platform articulation and voter outreach are exactly what inchoate political parties need. Last, in young democracies we find that political entrepreneurs are beginning to understand the value of voter outreach, platform development and other features of advanced parties. In these situations, assistance should focus on reforms that parties are less likely to adopt voluntarily, such as in areas of internal democracy, or, in advanced cases, begin to phase out party assistance altogether.
- To be effective and sustainable, political party assistance should directly address the **incentives of politicians and political parties** by helping them understand how reform can work in their best interests. Simply exhorting politicians and political parties to be more civic-minded, however, will not yield desired results. Rather, assistance strategies must target and support institutions capable of changing incentives and, in turn, party and party elite behavior. Fundamentally, assistance should try to create a link in the mind of politicians between the public interest and their own interests, namely, achieving electoral success or political power. Advisors can argue that changes in behavior have major political implications and try to demonstrate how changes can benefit parties, particularly if they are early adopters. A related proposition is that in some contexts, such as in many consolidating or more open democratic systems, those seeking to change the behavior of parties should consider program strategies to alter incentives, such as working with civil society organizations to increase pressure on parties from the “demand side.”
- Current political party assistance programs have yet to take full advantage of the potential transformative **relationship between civil society organizations and**

- political parties.** Although the party institutes and USAID have long partnered with election-monitoring organizations, cooperation with other watchdog groups and nonpartisan think-tanks remains underdeveloped. By exposing incompetence, corruption and abuses of power, these think-tanks can help reorient party elite incentives away from self-enrichment and toward the public good. They can also boost party capacity by providing policy expertise and other skills training.
- Though normatively laudable, the goal of making dramatic advances in the role of **women and youth** in politics is most likely not attainable in the near term in many political environments. Moreover, concentrating scarce political party assistance resources on women and youth programming may actually draw resources away from the more fundamental goals USAID hopes to achieve. For example, in Kyrgyzstan and Georgia, the party institutes' focus on gender and youth initiatives diverts attention from the more immediate and pressing needs of building ideologically coherent, competent political parties. Until parties are organizationally capable and develop coherent platforms, the question of increased mobilization of women and youth within parties, indeed the question of increased societal mobilization writ large, will remain secondary.
  - In some countries USAID, the State Department and the party institutes **pursue competing institutional interests** and disagree on priorities, budgets, strategies and tactics. Although disagreement can be healthy, the DI team observed cases where conflicting interests may have adversely affected political party assistance. This report does not pretend to offer solutions to these long-standing institutional conflicts. One potential area for improvement, however, is to encourage the party institutes to perform more intensive and rigorous evaluation of their own work. As discussed in the literature review, both NDI and IRI have recently undertaken studies with USAID funding designed to bolster the state of knowledge on party development and spread lessons learned from their own experience.
  - The **scope of the party institutes' work** extends beyond political party assistance. Accordingly, political party assistance programs are often connected to civil society, civic education, monitoring, legislative, and other democracy and governance programs. In some cases, for instance in matching civil society programming with traditional party development strategies, closely integrating party development and other DG assistance goals is highly desirable. In other cases, though, unclear divisions of responsibility can become problematic for programming. Further, there are other sources of assistance to parties in the region, including other donors as well as private consultants, providing competition of a sort to the party institutes. This assistance is often focused more narrowly on elections, but the fact that it exists suggests that parties are able and willing to look beyond traditional sources of assistance, and this challenges USAID and the party institutes to be more creative and adapt their programs to continue to attract attention from parties.
  - There are some differences within the U.S. government and within the party institutes over whether **electoral success or improving party capacity** should be the

central objective of party assistance programs. In some situations, most notably in Serbia, electoral competitiveness has clearly been an important short-term goal. There is a danger, however, in using elections as the standard for success in party assistance. If the ultimate goal of party assistance is encouraging the creation of a viable party system with multiple democratically oriented, popularly supported parties, a strategy that emphasizes elections risks creating a situation in which the goal of electoral victory for one side outweighs the broader goal of providing the electorate with meaningful choice and representation. In general the purpose of election-related party assistance should be to build strong political party organizations, not to help particular parties in particular elections.

- Until political activists address internal imbalances between the **center and the regions** in many countries, political parties will remain abstractions for vast portions of the population. In the comprehensive OPAL program in Romania, USAID and the party institutes made a concerted effort not only to deepen party assistance in the regions, but also to deepen civil society-political party interactions at the local level. Although it should be stressed that Romania enjoys an environment which is broadly conducive to party development and that the OPAL program alone is not responsible for Romania's comparatively strong political parties, similar programs in less hospitable programs nevertheless hold considerable promise in comparison to capital-centric party assistance strategies.
- Both party institutes have focused a great deal of attention on **public opinion research** in their political party assistance programs. This research provides important input into the development of party platforms and campaign strategy. In addition, the party institutes' emphasis on polling has helped establish survey research as a democratic norm and has focused attention on the importance of public opinion in a democracy. Survey research, however, is a tactic rather than a broad strategy and its limitations should be acknowledged. While it can be a powerful aid in furthering party development, the party institutes should be judicious about the use of public opinion polling and should keep in mind the goals of party (and democratic) development. They should continue to ensure the impartiality, integrity and technical competence of their local partners and consultants.
- **Selection of partners** is often a controversial and difficult question for donors and providers of party assistance. The multiparty orientation of U.S. assistance is critical and should be continued, even deepened. Providing or withholding assistance based on party identification risks alienating seemingly illiberal elites and parties which, provided the right incentives, might actually prove reformist and progressive. USAID's *Political Party Assistance Policy* directs the U.S. party institute implementers to work only with democratically oriented parties. Although this policy is understandable, the great advantage and innovation of U.S. political party assistance strategies, in contrast to European practice of preaching to the choir, is that U.S. methods encompass a broad slice of the political spectrum and thereby provide incentives for all political activists to embrace political reform. Some level of engagement short of actual assistance, even with extreme, non-

democratic parties, might help to expose them to democratic norms and push them to some modicum of reform.

- Political party assistance has primarily consisted of programs that work directly with political parties, individually or collectively. At times, assistance providers have also worked to improve a country's party system. These efforts, aimed at **reforming the party system and legal framework** within which parties operate, have sometimes yielded successes and can be productive even in seemingly inhospitable environments. The party institutes in Kyrgyzstan and Georgia, most notably, provided expertise and hosted multiple roundtables so as to encourage domestic actors to carefully deliberate and, ultimately, to adopt constitutional reform and legislation conducive to strengthening multiparty democracy. Assistance providers should continue to look for such opportunities to improve the party framework.
- Perhaps the most fundamental but overlooked value added of political party programs is the opportunity to **build relationships** with local parties and political elites that can **reinforce important democratic norms**. Furthermore, maintaining a presence in a country allows assistance providers to seize unexpected opportunities for democratic reform when they present themselves. The observation that party assistance can have lasting, positive effects merely by being present should certainly not be used as an excuse to avoid rigorous critiques of current programs and efforts to improve on weaknesses. This observation does provide justification, though, for maintaining assistance to parties even in the face of daunting structural constraints.

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## APPENDIX A: GEORGIA COUNTRY REPORT

### POLITICAL PARTY ASSISTANCE IN GEORGIA

The Georgia case illustrates well the constructive role political party assistance can have in the run up to competitive elections and the critical need for continued party assistance during periods of post-electoral consolidation. Since 1994, USAID and the party institutes have worked with Georgian political actors to further norms of political pluralism and build party capacity. USAID's strategy has been to engage political leaders both in and out of power. As a result of this inclusive approach, USAID gained some degree of cooperation from the Shevardnadze regime while, at the same time, it also aided democracy proponents in their efforts to hold the Shevardnadze government to its pledge of free and fair elections.

Since the 2003 Rose Revolution and Shevardnadze's peaceful departure from power, USAID has continued to work closely with political office holders and, as a result, continues to provide valued assistance to Georgia's democratically oriented ruling United National Movement. Importantly, though, smaller parties that were formerly allied with the UNM have become dissatisfied with the level of consolidation around the ruling party and with its control over all levels and branches of government. The resulting increase in the number of parties with little government representation suggests that future USAID political party assistance strategy might consider supplementing ongoing parliament and executive-oriented programs with new programming that deepens assistance to the struggling and poorly organized political opposition. While NDI has expressed interest in engaging several viable, extra-parliamentary opposition parties that have significant members and the potential to play a role in Georgia's democratic development, its program in Georgia is on parliamentary strengthening. Under USAID's division of responsibilities, IRI has worked on party development, including with parties outside parliament.

#### Current Party Assistance Objectives in Georgia

The central challenge for USAID party assistance in Georgia today is translating the success the party institutes had working with the united 2003 pro-democracy coalition to engaging many competing, yet still pro-democracy oriented political parties. To a real degree, party assistance is more challenging in today's more liberal Georgia than it was under Shevardnadze's semiauthoritarian rule. Whereas during the Shevardnadze presidency the constant threat of autocratic backsliding served as a unifying incentive and mobilizing force for Georgia's democrats, the current Saakashvili government is, in many Georgians' minds, the embodiment of democracy. With the Saakashvili government's domestic and international popularity still high, the criticisms and dissent the current opposition now offers appear to many to be minor quibbles rather than substantive policy alternatives. Critically though, as Madison cogently demonstrates in *Federalist 51*, politicians, like the rest of us, are not angels, and the best means to ensure leaders' ambitions do not undermine the rights of the polity more broadly is to ensure multiple and counterbalancing interests.

To this end, USAID and the party institutes have identified the following objectives as critical to post Rose Revolution democratic consolidation:

- (1) Increasing party capacity and transparency so as to enable greater public input
- (2) Improving the transparency of the electoral process so as to ensure free and fair elections
- (3) Increasing youth and women participation and representation in political parties
- (4) Encouraging issue-based dialogue among parties.<sup>84</sup>

The party institutes in Georgia after the Rose Revolution, in contrast to the pervasive challenges NDI and IRI confront in Kyrgyzstan, enjoy the relative luxury of being able to apply party development strategies to more viable and functioning political parties. That is, whereas to a large degree the party institutes' approach in Kyrgyzstan has been to focus on improving preconditions for political party development, in Georgia these preconditions largely exist and, therefore, NDI and IRI can proceed with more traditional political party development programs. This next section outlines the successes NDI and IRI have had in encouraging political party development. At the same time, we note that the considerable advances the party institutes have helped effect remain, in many cases, tenuous. Specifically, our analysis suggests that both close relations between the UNM and many Georgian media outlets and the limited number of effective policy-monitoring organizations, among other things, limit the opposition's ability to articulate compelling policy alternatives.

### *Deepening Party Capacity and Improving Public Input*

NDI and IRI's efforts to deepen party capacity and improve public input have yielded welcome results. NDI's parliamentary program has increased both the professionalism of MPs and interparty dialogue, developments critical to resolving opposition MPs' boycott of the parliament in spring 2006.<sup>85</sup> NDI's greatest asset is that its parliamentary assistance program is sustained, whereas other donors' programs, such as the European Union's parliamentary program, consist of isolated transfers of technical assistance such as the provision of computers.

Several political leaders with whom we spoke did note that work with political activists outside of parliament has declined since 2004. One leader of a Georgian party without representation in parliament observed that while his party worked with the institutes actively before 2004, he sensed the institutes "now largely work with governing and opposition parties in the parliament, not opposition parties outside of the parliament." Another Georgian party leader added that NDI's post-2004 focus on parties with parliamen-

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<sup>84</sup> DI interviews with NDI, Georgia; NDI, "Georgia: Parliamentary Oversight, Responsiveness and Transparency," (Quarterly Report: July 1- September 30, 2006), p. 6; IRI, "CEPPS/IRI Quarterly Report: April – June 2006, Georgia: Youth Today!" pp. 4-8.

<sup>85</sup> This boycott was sparked by the UNM-controlled parliament evicting one opposition MP on the grounds that his business activities conflicted with his MP responsibilities. For more on the boycott, see Jean-Christophe Peuch, "Georgia: Crisis Between Opposition And Government Deepens," *Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty*, April 7, 2006. Available online: <http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2006/04/10a5f3e0-b250-4931-a373-e587829611ef.html>

tary representation, “only strengthens Saakashvili’s growing power,” echoing a common refrain among opposition leaders that, since Saakashvili’s UNM controls the parliament, USAID’s assistance serves more to strengthen their power than to advance political pluralism. Unfortunately, because NDI had only a parliamentary strengthening program, it was constrained in its ability to address these concerns. NDI’s parliamentary program, however, has included assistance to the parliament and the Adjara Supreme Council on oversight of the executive. NDI has advised members of parliament and the Chamber of Controls on the process of budgetary oversight of the executive, and has further assisted opposition factions in better understanding rules of procedure for submitting questions to and requests of government ministers.

NDI, it should be stressed, acknowledges the tradeoffs involved in directing resources toward building parliamentary capacity. On the one hand, assistance to the parliament has increased the capacity of MPs and, equally important, has helped create a corps of skilled parliamentary staffers. At the same time neither party institute experts, nor for that matter, the vast majority of political observers, anticipated that the UNM would come to dominate the government as much as it has following the Rose Revolution and that a party assistance strategy appropriate for the 2004 parliament might not be as relevant in 2006. USAID officials both in Tbilisi and in Washington, along with their party institute counterparts, well understand this changed reality and have indicated that future party assistance strategies will consolidate the successes of the parliamentary program while, at the same time, deepening assistance to parties without parliamentary representation.

Indeed, some movement in this direction is already underway. Leaders of several political parties—parties both with and without a parliamentary presence—note that the party institutes’ recent public polling as well as party platform design seminars are a welcome aid. IRI has devoted considerable time and resources to party platform development, in particular to (1) sharing and explaining the results of its frequent polls to political party leaders, and (2) helping these parties devise platforms based on the findings of these polls. Working in these areas, IRI frequently adapted its programming so as to pursue activities more suited to Georgia’s immediate political party assistance needs. Consistent with a 2006 NDI-USAID assessment, political activists argued that the construction and articulation of a coherent party platform remains the greatest single challenge for Georgian parties and that public opinion surveys provide a needed “reality check” for parties when evaluating which strategies and ideologies will resonate with the electorate.

Moreover, because IRI has successfully established itself as an honest and impartial broker through its polling and platform development work, it has been able to bring together parties inside and out of government to discuss laws affecting political party formation. Thus, both the ruling UNM and opposition parties readily acknowledge that IRI roundtables have proven indispensable in ensuring a deliberative framework for devising legislation on political party financing. IRI, in its advisory role, helped persuade ruling UNM elites to agree to legislation ensuring that any political party that wins 4 percent or more of the national level party vote will receive government financing. Further, in the summer and fall of 2006, IRI, in partnership with the Council of Europe, sponsored a series of roundtables for government and opposition, the end result of which was the governing

UNM's abandonment of proposed legislation that would have adversely affected opposition parties' ability to raise funds. Ensuring such improvements in party financing is a significant step forward in advancing the capacity of Georgia's smaller political parties.

Georgian activists and political experts readily acknowledge IRI's successful and balanced party capacity-building efforts since the Rose Revolution. In this regard, IRI benefited from not being constrained to work with Parliament, as NDI was. As Saakashvili's government applies its administrative advantages to securing greater political control of the parliament, the institutes' abilities to work with an array of political parties will depend on assistance strategies that allow them to avoid such constraints.

### ***Increasing youth and women participation and representation in political parties***

USAID's party assistance strategy in Georgia emphasizes increasing the representation of youth and women in political parties.<sup>86</sup> Although this is a laudable and, indeed, normatively imperative goal, the Democracy International team shares the party institutes' concern that concentrating scarce political party assistance resources predominantly on women and youth programming may actually detract from the more fundamental goals USAID hopes to achieve. More specifically, the party institutes' focus on gender and youth initiatives at times diverts attention from the immediate needs for building ideologically coherent, competent political parties. Until parties in Georgia develop coherent platforms, the question of increased mobilization of women and youth within parties, indeed the question of increased societal mobilization writ large, will remain secondary. This is not to say that women and youth programming should be ceased. Just the opposite, such programming should be continued, but should be complemented with concomitant attention to helping political leaders better articulate platforms so that parties prove to be organizations women and youth actually want to join.

### ***Media Independence and Civic Organizations***

The prospect for party development in Georgia has been hampered by growing problems in the media and civil society sectors. Access to a free, independent media is critical to improving the capacity of existing Georgian political parties. Conversely, government control over media can prove increasingly toxic to political party formation. Troubling findings from field interviews in both Tbilisi and Kutaisi suggest growing inequalities in access between opposition and government parties to national and local level media outlets. Multiple interview respondents noted that the ruling United National Movement (UNM) party frequently marshals "administrative resources" so as to both increase its control over media outlets and to promote a steady stream of negative campaign advertisements.<sup>87</sup> While independent media that is critical of the government does exist, the

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<sup>86</sup> CEPPS/IRI Quarterly Report: April – June 2006, "Georgia: Youth Today!" p. 1.

<sup>87</sup> A party leader, for example, faults the UNM for appropriating Tbilisi city budget funds to finance the production and distribution of a glossy magazine touting the achievements of the UNM's mayoral candidate. Ironically though, and demonstrating that the Georgian media is not fully in the pocket of the ruling party, the party leader's charges of UNM budgetary misappropriations were broadcast by Rustavi-2, an ostensibly pro-government television station. See "City Authorities in Georgian Capital Accused of Improper Use of Public Funds," Rustavi-2 TV, August 18, 2006. Available online through LexisNexis.

opposition's complaints are backed by similar findings from groups like Reporters without Frontiers.<sup>88</sup> The UNM counters that opposition parties have been given opportunities to advertise, particularly on television, and at times have chosen not to fill up their allotted spaces.

One potential explanation for these developments in the media environment is the decreasing ability of national-level civic organizations and watchdog groups to monitor and publicize government abuses. Immediately following the November 2003 Rose Revolution, many of Georgia's leading civil society activists moved from the NGO sector into government. Other leading civil society activists, dissatisfied with the UNM's growing monopoly on power, departed their NGO posts to join the political opposition. This migration from civil society to political parties is indicative of what political analysts Ghia Nodia and Ramaz Sakvarelidze identify as the broadening erosion in the human capacity of national-politics oriented NGOs.

In short, both the independent national media and politically oriented civic organizations have witnessed declining capacity in the wake of the Rose Revolution, which has hampered party development, particularly for the opposition. The politicization of civil society erodes NGOs' capacity, making civic organizations less credible watchdogs against government media violations. A narrowing independent media, for its part, decreases the ability of NGOs to publicize corruption and political rights violations. USAID is correct to identify media and civic organizations as critical to political reform. Specific to this study, an independent media and effective civic organizations are essential if USAID and the party institutes are to be successful in implementing their party assistance strategies.

### **Georgia: Lessons Learned**

The above analysis of party assistance in Georgia demonstrates the considerable support USAID has provided to democratically-oriented groups both before and after the Rose Revolution. At the same time, this analysis suggests that, since 2003, the challenges of party assistance have changed and may necessitate readjustment of current party development strategies. More specifically, much of the democratic camp has now consolidated into one leading power, the UNM, with multiple smaller and largely ineffective opposition parties outside of government.

Paralleling this new division in the political environment are similar divisions in the press and in civil society. Analogous to the "bandwagon effects" political scientists document in the U.S. when new and popular administrations win power, so too in Georgia do we see a gravitation among media and civil society elites toward the UNM.<sup>89</sup> Although understandable, this gravitation toward the UNM makes platform articulation and voter outreach more difficult for Georgia's smaller political parties in the short run. In the long

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<sup>88</sup> For an overview of the Reporters without Frontiers findings, see Zaal Anjaparidze, Freedom of Media in Georgia Declines Even Further, Jamestown Foundation Eurasia Daily Monitor, v. 2, no. 202 (October 31, 2005). Available online:

[http://www.jamestown.org/publications\\_details.php?volume\\_id=407&issue\\_id=3510&article\\_id=2370414](http://www.jamestown.org/publications_details.php?volume_id=407&issue_id=3510&article_id=2370414)

<sup>89</sup> See, for example, Patrick J. Kenney and Tom W. Rice, "The Psychology of Political Momentum," *Political Research Quarterly* 47:4 (Dec., 1994), pp. 923-938.

run, these bandwagon effects in societies with weak democratic institutions can produce cycles of political convulsion where an initially liberally-oriented dominant party, facing few challenges from an effective opposition, loses dynamism and popular support, thereby engendering new rounds of political revolution. This by no means is Georgia's destiny and, encouragingly, democracy-supporters in the UNM, the political opposition and the international donor community all stressed in our interviews that building pluralism in the media and in civil society will help ensure the future vitality and pluralism of Georgian politics.



## APPENDIX B: KYRGYZSTAN COUNTRY REPORT

### POLITICAL PARTY ASSISTANCE IN KYRGYZSTAN

#### Introduction

The Kyrgyz case demonstrates that, even in challenging environments, party assistance can encourage semiauthoritarian states toward increased political pluralism. At the same time, the Kyrgyz case illustrates that hard-won political openings may be followed by authoritarian backsliding rather than by the consolidation of competitive politics. The advance of political pluralism and democratically oriented parties is not a linear process, and even the best assistance strategies may be overwhelmed by the weight of deeply engrained patterns of autocratic rule. Such setbacks are not cause for abandoning party assistance altogether. Incidences of authoritarian retrenchment do demand, though, that party assistance strategies remain focused on encouraging the *process* of competitive elections—including, in this case, constitutional reforms to establish the basis for electoral processes—rather than, as in cases of democratic consolidation following truly competitive founding elections, focusing resources on improving party platforms and voter outreach.

#### Party Assistance Objectives in Kyrgyzstan

USAID and the party institutes have sought to achieve the following objectives in Kyrgyzstan:

- (1) Further the ability of political parties to contest elections
- (2) Deepen links between central party leadership in Bishkek and regional party branches throughout the country
- (3) Increase youth and women representation in political parties
- (4) Improve party outreach to voters
- (5) Deepen cooperation between political parties and NGOs.<sup>90</sup>

These party assistance objectives are interdependent. Programmatically, party institutes' programs can, and in the case of Kyrgyzstan, have proven mutual reinforcing. Moreover, the achievement of downstream political party assistance objectives—most notably better center-region relations among party branches and greater voter outreach—is dependent on the prior achievement of an improved political environment within which political parties can operate. Accordingly, both IRI and NDI concentrated much of their efforts, particularly following the executive leadership change in March 2005, on assisting attempts to improve the political environment so as to help institutionalize norms of political pluralism and competitive elections.

At the time of this writing, the constitutional reform process in Kyrgyzstan is ongoing and tenuous. Nevertheless, as the discussion below demonstrates, IRI and NDI assistance in this continuing process has proven helpful in encouraging a more deliberative and

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<sup>90</sup> See, for example, CEPPS/IRI Quarterly Report: April – June 2006 and NDI Quarterly Report: January 1, 2005 - March 31, 2005.

open environment for constitutional reform, something which is critical if, in turn, Kyrgyzstan's constitution is to guarantee a deliberative and open environment for political contestation. NDI and IRI's remaining objectives have met with less immediate success. Importantly, though, Kyrgyzstan's current inhospitable political environment may hide what may ultimately prove to be substantive achievements of party assistance. More specifically, just as NDI and IRI assistance helped create a constituency of party activists critical to furthering Kyrgyz constitutional reform, so too might current collaboration with these same activists yield as of yet unrealized dividends once – and if – liberal constitutional reform is implemented.

### *Furthering the Ability of Political Parties to Contest Elections*

Kyrgyzstan's broader political environment itself remains the greatest brake on Kyrgyz political parties' ability to contest elections. Until recently, Kyrgyzstan's executive-centered political system left little room for either the parliament or political parties. Importantly, though, the March 2005 change in Kyrgyz leadership opened new possibilities for political participation and the party institutes rapidly responded and deepened their assistance to government elites, political party leaders and civil society activists oriented toward constitutional reform.<sup>91</sup> More specifically, the institutes devoted considerable resources both to bringing together critical and often opposed political and civil society actors and to explaining through comprehensive yet understandable methods the merits of presidential versus parliamentary systems.

The November 2006 constitutional amendments, many of which were first drafted during IRI-, NDI- and IFES-supported roundtables, promised a real shift away from executive-control, the growth of true parliamentary powers and new incentives for political elites to form coherent and strong parties. Specifically, the November amendments stipulated that (1) at least half of all seats in future parliaments are to be selected through party list votes, (2) the party with the greatest number of seats in the legislature, not the president, is to select the Prime Minister, (3) the president is to cede control of the National Security Service (SNB) and the Prosecutor-General's Office to the parliament and prime minister, and (4) any presidential initiatives to dismiss the chairmen of the Central Election Commission and the Accounting Chamber are to require parliamentary approval.

These amendments have since been revised, and the executive has regained many of the powers he ceded in November. Importantly, though, at the time of this writing, the provision to elect 50 percent of parliamentary seats through proportional representation remains. This is a promising development for the future of Kyrgyzstan's political parties and an outcome IRI and NDI helped secure.

### *Deepening Center-Region Party Links*

Well-functioning political parties did not exist before November 2006 and still do not exist in Kyrgyzstan. Interview respondents in Bishkek did note that NDI and IRI's political party training sessions and civic education projects were helpful in shifting percep-

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<sup>91</sup> For a comprehensive overview of these efforts, see CEPPS/IRI Quarterly Report: April – June 2006 and CEPPS/NDI Quarterly Report: July 1 to September 30, 2006.

tions of “party,” from Communist and Soviet notions to more liberal-democratic understandings.<sup>92</sup> Specifically, members of parliament perceived the institutes’ encouragement of groups of deputies as helpful steps toward the creation of proto-parties. Party activists both in and out of parliament similarly credited the institutes’ public with encouraging parties to design platforms more responsive to broad public opinion rather than to narrow personal patronage.

While Bishkek-based party elites were quick to applaud NDI and IRI’s work in helping achieve these changes, the party activists in the regions were less positive about the institutes’ efforts and most noted that the institutes’ programs could be substantially improved. Regional party representatives from Jalal Abad and Osh, though they knew of NDI and IRI’s work and, in some cases, had participated in the institutes’ training sessions, lamented regional training sessions were infrequent and that such sessions were overrun by attendees hand-selected by local administrators. The party institutes blame budget limitations for their inability to sustain more intensive regional training. In any event, a more sustained presence in the regions is essential if democracy assistance is to succeed in building grassroots constituencies for political parties outside the capital.

### *Improving Women and Youth Representation in Political Parties*

IRI and NDI programs focused on increasing youth and women representation within political parties similarly did not yield immediate results. This absence of success, it should be stressed, is not due to the party institutes’ lack of imagination or effort. NDI has encouraged parties to seek popular venues—for example dance parties—to attract younger members. IRI was more active in its youth programming, partnering with the group, Free Generation, to conduct a series of seminars on democracy and youth participation. Leaders of party youth wings with whom Democracy International met stated these seminars were helpful both in clarifying the role of political parties and in explaining the benefits and drawbacks of potential constitutional reforms. Unfortunately, however, these same leaders regretted that, despite the party institutes’ emphasis on youth politics, the Kyrgyz party elites saw little need to reach out to younger constituencies. The leader of one party youth wing, for example, stated that “youth are kept in a box, as if in an Indian reservation . . . we have no real influence.”

The party institutes’ attempts to increase party outreach to women similarly have yielded few immediate results. NDI has actively supported the Kyrgyz “Women’s Discussion Group,” a group of 25 leading female politicians who meet bi-monthly to discuss strategies to redress the gender imbalance in Kyrgyz politics. The Women’s Discussion Group does appear to have advanced the profile of its members. Regrettably though, the majority of Kyrgyz political elites, including those members of the Women’s Discussion Group, appear little concerned with reaching out to and improving the representation of women in Kyrgyz politics.

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<sup>92</sup> For example, Emil Aliev, Bishkek-based deputy chairman of the Ar-Namys party, noted that NDI and IRI training sessions are helpful in shifting Communist era patronage-oriented expectations of parties to more ideology-based expectations of political parties (DI Interview, Bishkek, December 14, 2006).

### *Improving Party Outreach to Voters*

IRI-Kyrgyzstan seeks to help “political parties prepare proposals for election reform and convey the proposal(s) to the public through the media, roundtables or conferences.”<sup>93</sup> As discussed above, achieving this objective is difficult given that both party institutes do not have a sustained presence in the regions, where the vast majority of Kyrgyzstan’s voters are. Moreover, securing improved voter outreach is difficult given the dearth of media outlets, particularly in the regions.

Newspapers, magazines and Internet subscriptions are too costly for most Kyrgyz outside the capital. Importantly, however, there exist alternative information outlets that the party institutes might productively pursue to assist party outreach to voters. One alternative medium for information access, particularly throughout southern Kyrgyzstan, is the bazaar. Several media experts in Osh are in the early stages of designing strategies through which to use the bazaar to reach populations that otherwise have little access to information. Alisher Saipov, the Osh-based editor of *Ferghana.ru*’s Central Asia office, plans to distribute at the Kara Su bazaar a free weekly circular of this widely read and internationally respected Internet journal. *Ferghana.ru* receives approximately \$1,000 monthly through Google advertisements. This, coupled with a modest—and likely short term—increase in donor support could enable *Ferghana.ru* to distribute a circular to the 30,000 buyers and sellers who visit the Kara Su bazaar each week.

Similarly, Maksuda Aitikeeva, the director of the Osh Regional Media Center, sees public announcements systems located in bazaars, traditionally used to announce weddings and advertise the sale of livestock, as equally suitable instruments for political parties to reach constituencies in the regions. Making use of the traditional *ak sakal* networks, groups of older men who serve as community leaders, would also be fruitful. As one observer said of these informal information networks, “Kyrgyz can read about a news event 100 times, they can see and listen to reports on TV and radio... but until they hear it from the babushka at the fruit stall in the bazaar, they won't believe it.”

The challenge for political party assistance policy is to demonstrate to party leaders, the majority of whom reside in Bishkek, that (1) reaching out to regional electorates furthers party objectives and (2) traditional forms of media are as effective, if not more effective than modern forms of information communication technology. Curiously, Kyrgyz political elite devote immense resources to media—notably the Internet—which have minimal reach among potential constituencies when focusing on traditional technologies promise more immediate and widespread results.

### *Improving cooperation between political parties and NGOs*

Cooperation between political parties and NGOs has proven mixed in Kyrgyzstan. As of this writing, what had been the party institutes’ most prominent civil society partner, the Coalition of NGOs for Democracy and Civil Society, had ceased operating while a host of other civic organizations have risen in prominence. The Coalition’s mandate was to

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<sup>93</sup> CEPPS/IRI Quarterly Report: April – June 2006, p. 13.

unite Kyrgyz NGOs for the nonpartisan advocacy of electoral and broader democratic reforms. Problematically though, the Coalition leadership had a close association with the political opposition, particularly during the March 2005 “Tulip Revolution” and the November 2006 constitutional crisis. While the Coalition would argue it was within its mandate in arguing against the falsification of elections, this connection nevertheless undermined the organization’s nonpartisan credentials and, indirectly, the nonpartisan credentials of the U.S. mission in Kyrgyzstan.<sup>94</sup>

Our interviews with other NGOs suggest that why some organizations like the Coalition prove more politicized – and ultimately less tenable from an assistance standpoint – rests on two critical dimensions:

- **Mandates:** Clearly defined and targeted mandates serve NGOs better than expansive mission statements
- **Process versus Politics:** A focus on process rather than personal politics helps maintain nonpartisan credentials

Civil society organizations with clearly defined mandates and which focus on political processes rather than the faults of individual political actors are more likely to be perceived as honest and impartial brokers. As such, these organizations are better positioned to conduct civic education and connect political parties to the broader electorate.

### **Kyrgyzstan: Lessons Learned**

The preceding comparative analysis of variations in the success of political party assistance generates several hypotheses for further comparative study beyond the Kyrgyz case.

First, at the institutional level, this analysis and, indeed, the party institutes’ admirably flexible reaction to the March 2005 political opening in Kyrgyzstan, demonstrates that attention and assistance to reforming formal institutions and constitutional design can lay the foundations for future political party growth. IRI and NDI party assistance helped create a constituency for constitutional reform, a constituency that ultimately secured party list voting for future Kyrgyz parliaments. This change in how parliaments are elected promises to provide new incentives for future political party growth.

Second, Democracy International’s field research in the regions suggests that, while well-designed party programs can create a constituency for reform in the capital, training party activists in the center does not ensure that these activists will share lessons learned with counterparts in the regions. A considerably more sustained presence in the regions is essential if democracy assistance is to succeed in building grassroots constituencies for political parties outside the capital. By forcing parties to be accountable to a local electorate, this should help in alleviating one of the major sources of political fragmentation and party weakness at the national level as well.

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<sup>94</sup> For more on the Coalition’s mandate, see: Statement by Edil Baisalov, President of the Coalition for Democracy and Civil Society (Kyrgyzstan), Before the House Committee on International Relations, May 5, 2005, p. 2. Available online: <http://internationalrelations.house.gov/archives/109/bai050505.pdf>.

Third, our study suggests that, for youth- and women-focused assistance programs to succeed, party assistance must encourage not only youth and women wings within political parties but also must engage—or at the very least, acknowledge—culturally shaped and long-enduring patterns of political power. In Kyrgyzstan, as in many countries, political power has traditionally been the domain of middle aged and older males. Although this is regrettable, it is a reality that perhaps is not immediately amenable to party assistance programs. While promoting youth and women’s groups will help change ingrained patterns of rule, political party assistance must also work to change incentive structures that as of now hold few rewards for more inclusive voter outreach.

Fourth, our study suggests that while Kyrgyzstan’s media environment remains underdeveloped, alternative networks do exist through which parties can reach potential constituencies. Specifically, political parties might work through Kyrgyzstan’s well-established bazaar and community leader information networks to reach constituencies outside of the capital and regional centers.

Last, our study suggests that while political party–civil society cooperation is possible, party institutes should pay careful attention to identifying and working with sustainable civic organizations, namely organizations with clearly defined mandates and which focus on process rather than personal politics.



## **APPENDIX C: ROMANIA COUNTRY REPORT**

### **POLITICAL PARTY ASSISTANCE IN ROMANIA**

#### **Background**

Romania's ongoing post-1989 transition to democracy and its accession to full EU membership in January 2007 provide the larger context for political party assistance there. Overall, Romania is in the process of a relatively successful democratic transition, aided substantially by the United States, including USAID. USAID and the party institutes are now completing their work in Romania, as the country will "graduate" from U.S. assistance in 2007. In joining the EU, Romania would seem to have embarked on a new stage of its democratic transition. While much has been accomplished and the basic conditions for a successful transition have been met, Romania has much more to do to consolidate its democracy in the new European context.

National politics and parties have achieved a level of success through peaceful transfers of power in 1996, 2000 and 2004. There is every reason to expect these will continue in 2008 and beyond. At the same time, parties continue to face challenges of transition and consolidation. On the one hand, there seems to be a long-term movement towards a system with two dominant parties, further contributing to stability and to a basis for further advances. On the other hand, parties have continuing needs for development of their basic capacities to address public needs rather than private interests, to participate in the formulation of public policy through expertise, to advance internal party democracy, and to combat party corruption, which continues at an alarming level. Romania elects the members of both houses of parliament through party-list proportional representation from multi-member constituencies with between two and 29 seats; the large size of many of these districts impedes the development of linkages between parties and citizens.

#### **Political Party Assistance Programs**

Since the revolution in Romania in 1989, USAID and the party institutes have supported relatively modest PPA efforts during three phases of DG assistance: (1) early support for national-level reforms including limited PPA; (2) a subsequent emphasis on local democratic development, including support by the party institutes for local political parties; and (3) a final "pre-graduation" effort to transfer local progress to national institutions. NDI also received NED funding for work related to the 2004 elections.

In general, political party assistance has not been extensive in Romania. The Democratic Party (PD) and the National Liberal Party (PNL) have been major beneficiaries of U.S. assistance, although representatives from a number of other parties have also participated in institute programs. The opposition Social Democratic Party (PSD) appears to have ample resources and has paid for its own consultants, including international figures such as Dick Morris (who famously advised President Bill Clinton, among others). Extremists have not received conventional PPA but seem, from all accounts, to receive considerable outside assistance from unnamed sources.

In addition to U.S. organizations, four German party foundations are working in the country. In 2005 the British Council had a large project linking youth politicians from Romania and other countries across the EU. The Westminster Foundation was involved previously, sponsoring some short-term consultants (e.g. Labor aiding Socialists), but has not been active recently.

Programs to assist civil society organizations have been designed to complement the much more limited investment in direct political party assistance. Some civil society organizations have engaged with political parties on particular issues, such as party finance. CSOs have cooperated with parties in monitoring parliamentary activities and have worked with parties both in and out of Parliament to establish mechanisms for accountability and transparency, such as a model web-based information system about parties and the Parliament.

### **PPA Implementation: Overview of Institute Programs**

A 2001 democracy and governance assessment for Romania recommended a focus on the local level, including assistance to local party organizations to help them become more responsive to citizen interests, with the expectation that this in turn would stimulate demand for reform at the national level.<sup>95</sup> In May 2002, USAID initiated the Opening Politics by Acting Locally (OPAL) program to engage civil society organizations and local political parties in activities to increase political participation and promote political reforms and to strengthen representation and accountability. In its 2002-06 strategy document, USAID explained that its local focus would target greater transparency and responsiveness, for example with regard to candidate selection procedures, constituent services, party platforms and program for marginalized social groups.<sup>96</sup>

When the project began in 2002, Romania was experiencing a political drag on its democratic transition. The ruling party was too strong: the orchestrated political migration of opposition elected officials to the ruling party, creeping “state capture,” and pressures upon independent media and civil society gave rise to concerns of a political class that had significantly strayed from the democratic principles of shared power, separation of government institutions, the rule of law, and the advancement of the public interest.

Regarding local-level political party operations, USAID recognized that Romania’s major political parties, in government and opposition, were devoid of meaningful engagement in local affairs. Party branches existed but were typically “activated” by headquarters in Bucharest, usually around campaign time. There was little in the way of non-election-related outreach to citizens, in the form of issue advocacy, policy reform or community development. There was little engagement with local civic groups on shared issues of concern, and there were few if any instances of structured communication within branches among local membership. Similarly, local civic groups were uncertain of how they might engage political party branches and local elected officials in pursuing their agendas.

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<sup>95</sup> Associates in Rural Development, “Democracy and Governance Assessment of Romania” (September 2001)

<sup>96</sup> USAID, “USAID’s Assistance Strategy for Romania, 2002-2006”; USAID, “Data Sheet” (2002-2007)

Thus, through cooperative agreements from USAID in Romania for the OPAL program, NDI and IRI engaged CSOs and local branches of political parties in activities to increase citizen participation in community life and politics. By promoting the participation of CSOs in politics and strengthening the local capacity of governing and opposition political parties to address the needs and interests of citizens, USAID and the institutes have sought to invigorate Romania's political life with greater dialogue, participation and accountability. They also have tried to help party branches expand community outreach and reduce dependence on central party structures in order to become more internally democratic and responsive to community needs.

In 2006, as discussed below, USAID and the party institutes shifted back to a national focus, seeking to nationalize local gains. Interviews indicated a wide range of opinions on this strategy.

### *NDI Programs*

In 2002, building on its support for political party and civil society organizational development since 1990, including a modest, three-year effort to promote youth political leaders, NDI began work under the OPAL program to help political parties build their outreach capacity at the local level, to assist civil society groups in advocating their policy interests before local government, and to bring party branches and local NGOs together to open the political process to greater public participation overall. This project has run for slightly less than five years at roughly \$320,000 a year, with supplementary funding provided around the 2004 general election cycle.<sup>97</sup>

NDI's five-year goals for the program included (1) improved monitoring of the performance of elected officials; (2) effective advocacy by CSOs on behalf of community needs; (3) increased responsiveness of local party branches to citizens' initiatives; and (4) increased transparency of the political process framework. Notably, only the third objective would traditionally be thought of as the target of a political party assistance program per se.

The OPAL program has had three distinct phases. Phase I was in 2002 and 2003, in which NDI initially trained and mentored relatively well-organized party branches and then moved on to work with branches in less developed districts on citizen outreach, contact with local civic groups, and internal branch communication. Phase II, from the fall 2003 through 2004, was built around the general election cycle (including local elections in summer 2004, and presidential and parliamentary elections later that year), in which NDI devoted its programming to training local branches—candidates and members—in targeted, direct voter contact. The final phase, lasting from 2005 through 2006, turned from citizen outreach to constituent representation, primarily through a constituency relations assessment and manual that sought to connect MPs with citizen casework and local civic concerns.

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<sup>97</sup> NDI, "Romania" (July 2006); NDI Quarterly Reports to USAID (January-March and October-December 2000)

In Phase I, NDI chose to concentrate its initial training in parts of the country that were relatively advanced in political and economic terms, namely, Constanta and Timisoara, and provided training and technical assistance to branches of four main parties: the PD, PSD and PNL parties mentioned above, plus the National Christian Peasant Democratic Party (PNTCD). It subsequently extended its work to branches in the less-developed Hunedoara, Suceava, and Tulcea districts.

NDI reports that party branches responded to the training fairly quickly, conducting surveys of citizens to identify community issues (PNTCD), starting a party newsletter (PNTCD in Timisoara, PNL in Hunedoara), and voter contact action plans (all parties). PD in Constanta began a newsletter to citizens. One party branch in Timisoara started a project repainting rural schools in the district. NDI also trained party branches to conduct NGO outreach based. PSD in Timisoara sat down with the civic group APOWER to discuss cooperation on local legislation on domestic violence, and all major parties in Timisoara would go on to support APOWER's project to open a shelter for domestic abuse victims. PNL in Constanta worked with civic group ARAS to introduce a resolution in local council on NGO access to local government funds. That branch also started to convene informal focus groups around local issues, reportedly based on NDI suggestions.

With the start of campaign seasons in Phase II, party branches began to utilize their outreach to citizens and their cooperation with local NGOs in their campaign strategies. The fact that local elections preceded parliamentary and presidential elections in 2004 helped party branches to take the initiative in organizing their local campaigns, receiving guidance from Bucharest rather than top-down orders. NDI says it continually updated party headquarters in Bucharest on the progress made by their respective branches, although it is not clear why the party branches did not manage this communication adequately themselves, or why NDI was providing this service as part of a locally focused program. For their part, senior party officials were prepared to give branches greater autonomy in executing "ground campaigns."

NDI worked with the branches on a series of training programs designed to target their voters based on their earlier citizen surveys and through their NGO collaboration. Because of these previous contacts, and because party branches enjoyed stronger membership ranks owing to their previous citizen outreach, party candidates and activists were prepared to go door-to-door. Political parties in Romania, as elsewhere in the region, have tended to focus on media as the principal means of communicating with voters, rather than local organizing, meetings and door-to-door campaigns. But NDI helped local parties organize scripted door-to-door outreach that targeted their likely voting base, with some success.

Also during this second phase NDI undertook special training components for campaign managers and women candidates, focusing on campaign planning, team organization and building, media relations and message development, and voter research, targeting, and contact.

The results of the 2004 elections swept the opposition into government at the national level, which represented a transfer of power and an opportunity for Romania to put its

democratic transition back on track. Civil society organizations had a better opportunity to advocate for their interests at the national as well as the local level. The focus of Phase III of NDI's program, therefore, was to help political parties, and particularly elected officials, improve their ability to represent the interests of constituents and address their needs. In 2005 and 2006, NDI conducted a comprehensive assessment of constituency relations throughout the country, with the help of CURS, a leading research institute in Romania. From the results, NDI created party-specific manuals on constituency relations, showcasing best practices among members of parliament and their staffs, and providing recommendations on how to improve on individual casework and policy/legislation-based interaction with civic groups. These manuals have been distributed to the parties at the national and local levels.

NDI attempted to organize women elected officials in parliament by supporting an effort to create a multiparty women's parliamentary caucus to press for legislative remedies to economic and social problems that either disproportionately harm women or affect them in ways that require particular legislative relief. That effort has not yet been successful, particularly as the national-level political scene remains polarized and women are therefore reluctant to cooperate openly across party lines. Similar NDI-inspired efforts at the local level, which have brought elected women leaders from different parties together with women in the private sector and civil society, have produced joint projects to promote women entrepreneurs and other pro-women policies.

### *IRI Programs*

Until 1996, IRI focused in Romania on organization building and campaign training for democratic parties and coalitions. Of the four major parties with which IRI worked, only the Liberal Democrats still survive. After 1996, IRI shifted to working with government ministries on communications. Starting in 2002, under the OPAL program, IRI worked to combine stimulation of civil society demand for more responsive government with increased political party accountability to the electorate. For 2006-07 IRI has again shifted its focus, this time to national-level civic education, parliamentary and youth programs, though some of the latter are still directed at the local level. Funding over the course of the OPAL program has been about \$400,000 per year.<sup>98</sup>

Like NDI, IRI focused on assisting local political party organizations under OPAL by expanding citizen outreach, improving links between local political parties and local civil society organizations, and preparing for local elections. IRI reports it offered training on such topics as relations with CSOs, fundraising, local strategies, candidate recruitment and selection, and party activities between election cycles. IRI also placed a strong emphasis on the development of local party youth organizations. Simultaneously, IRI worked with the Romanian Academic Society and the Coalition for a Clean Parliament to convince parties to commit to vetting candidates for previous involvement with the secret police.

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<sup>98</sup> IRI, "IRI in Romania" (August 2006); IRI Quarterly Reports to USAID (July-September 2005 and July-September 2006)

To complement the program, IRI conducted several issue-based public opinion surveys. The polls were intended to provide objective, statistically based information to help local parties to identify community priorities and to construct or revise their local programs and strategies. IRI also hosted a series of polling seminars for political parties.

As stated above, much of IRI's recent work has shifted to the national level, particularly with regard to parliamentary activities. These include work with the Pro Democracy Association (APD) to develop parliamentary scorecards tracking MPs' voting records, as well as efforts with APD and the Advocacy Academy of Timisoara to improve public hearings in the Chamber of Deputies. IRI also has worked with the Romanian research firm CURS to carry out an assessment of Parliament, targeted both at MPs' opinions on their own work and public perceptions. Youth programming has included both national and local level work, including a Model Parliament project and training programs through local CSOs on such topics as civic engagement, organizational management, project development and fundraising.<sup>99</sup>

### **PPA in Romania**

When work under the OPAL program began in 2002, it set out to activate dormant party branches, and the institutes believes that the training, technical assistance, mentoring and exchanges have largely succeeded in getting branches to be better organized, more active in their outreach to citizens, and increasingly engaged with local civic groups on addressing issues that serve the public interest. There is some disagreement on this last point, though, with IRI noting in a recent Quarterly Report that "local branches continued to focus on the political agenda set by their national leaderships, with politics taking precedence over policy-making."<sup>100</sup>

The program also sought to have party branches assume a greater voice in national-level party politics, and, although branches arguably are now better organized, parties have not been willing to reform their systems of decision making. NDI argues that improving how members of parliament provide constituency relations, and by extension how party branches build their profile on local issues, should help local party activists assume stronger positions in guiding party policy formulation and legislative agendas.

There was some difference of opinion about the extent to which the party institutes' programs have genuinely increased cooperation between local CSOs and parties. The institutes played a considerable role in developing NGOs oriented toward the political process and political parties, but work with NGOs (e.g., grassroots monitoring) has been more visible than work with political parties (low profile provision of technical resources), which makes the approach toward the latter especially hard to analyze. Further, because the OPAL program was designed to foster links between parties and civil society organizations, it did not distinguish sharply between political party assistance and civil society assistance.

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<sup>99</sup> IRI Quarterly Report to USAID (July-September 2006)

<sup>100</sup> Ibid, pg. 8.



Many observers claim, however, that party assistance strategies have not kept pace with these changing circumstances. Parties now feel competent to conduct their own training of party activists and parliamentary staff members. Some suggest that while there is still a need for outside training expertise at the local level, it needs to be more targeted and specialized. For PPA in Romania to be effective going forward, a deeper understanding of the needs and incentives of political parties than now exists would be necessary.

EU accession in particular has provided incentives that have encouraged the process of party formation, and links between European and Romanian parties have helped establish party norms. The European Liberal Democrat and Reform party congress, for example, met in Bucharest in 2006. Many observers expressed concern, however, that even incentives related to EU membership will not be sufficient to force change in the habits or practices of the political parties.

In sum, modest USAID investments in PPA, along with the incentives generated by Romania's joining the EU, have helped to deepen and institutionalize political party development. Political parties and others in Romania seem to agree, however, that internal PPA driven by both NGOs and parties themselves is now the best approach. USAID's plans to pull out during 2007 appear set, and USAID is firm that the graduation is timely. As of the time of the team's visit, the German foundations were also planning to leave (although NDI reports that the three major German foundations now plan to remain). That would leave occasional ad hoc consultants, contracted by the parties themselves, as the only source of outside assistance. Thus, political party assistance in Romania may be ending, which would mean that any further developments in the party system would have to be achieved by the Romanian parties and the Romanian people.



## APPENDIX D: SERBIA COUNTRY REPORT

### POLITICAL PARTY ASSISTANCE IN SERBIA

In Serbia, major investments in the democratic transition, including political party assistance, laid the groundwork for relatively effective long-term assistance to political party development. Support for civil society and media contributed to the success of political party assistance. Early support for regime change gave way to expanded support for the political transition from within the country, which continues as support for the still incomplete consolidation of the democratic system.

#### Background

Serbia's transition to democracy began during the depths of the Milosevic dictatorship in the early 1990s with the advent of multiparty (though not fair) elections and the development of independent civil society organizations. The political opposition to Milosevic coalesced under the *Zajedno* banner during popular protests about local elections in late 1996 and, in the face of the government's attempt to steal elections in 2000, a unified opposition and well-coordinated democracy movement combined to force Milosevic's peaceful removal from office. Since then, the country has experienced substantial democratization. It has elected a president and a government committed to reform, and the National Assembly has enacted substantial legislative reforms.

Democratic political parties have made institutional progress since overthrowing Milosevic and initiating a political transition, but the movement of party leaders into government has weakened party leadership and structures. When the former opposition took office in 2000, the leaders and most active members of the parties became ministers, deputies and state officials. Parties were not able to generate new leadership necessary to take care of their own organizations and interests. Instead, many leaders served simultaneously as officials in government and their parties. This left the parties under the control of the state officials who did not have time to commit themselves to building party capacity. This resulting "governance gap" has hampered intra-party democracy and has hurt the capacity of political parties outside government.

Unresolved political issues with roots in the Milosevic era, such as the status of Kosovo, have also hindered prospects for political reform. Weak leadership has plagued the political process, and democratic political parties have failed to form effective coalitions or approaches to reform. Unrealized expectations have led to substantial public disillusionment, and voter apathy, combined with long-established regional patterns of ethnic divisions, has strengthened the hand of nationalist parties. Indeed, Milosevic-era nationalists have stymied the fractious group of democratic reformers at the ballot box. Inconclusive parliamentary elections, most recently in January 2007, have left fragile governments unable to pursue meaningful reform, and Serbia's entry to the EU has been delayed.

### Political Party Assistance Programs

In the face of this challenging environment, political parties in Serbia have developed substantially in recent years and well-resourced political party assistance has contributed to that change. Before Milosevic was forced from office in 2000, opposition political parties and PPA operated in a hostile environment. But foreign assistance had already begun to play a major role, especially in 1999-2000. NDI and IRI were major contributors to the early stages of party organizing and campaigning. During much of these initial capacity-building stages of PPA, the political party institutes and other supporters of opposition political parties had to operate from outside Serbia.

After Milosevic was removed from power, two successive reform governments took office, presenting new governance challenges to political parties. Party assistance programs focused on a new round of capacity-building in the face of a new opposition from strong “nondemocratic” political parties.

In its support of political parties in Serbia, as elsewhere, USAID has worked principally through the party institutes, the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) and the International Republican Institute (IRI). NDI and IRI have also received funds for Serbia programs from the National Endowment for Democracy.

Other donors, especially the Adenauer Foundation (representing the German Christian Democrats), the British Conservative Party working through the Westminster Foundation, and the Belgrade Fund for Political Excellence, a domestic non-partisan NGO which provides training to up-and-coming leaders in the political and civil society sectors, have provided assistance regarding party ideology, theory, values and issues. Other German foundations are also working in Serbia with their respective sister parties.

The more nationalist Socialist and Radical parties have not affirmed the new democratic context, and have either been excluded or have excluded themselves from U.S. and European government-sponsored political party assistance. Nevertheless those parties seem to be receiving advice and technical assistance from outside sources, allegedly including American and/or Italian private firms.

USAID is still developing its plans for political party assistance through FY 2008, to further develop political party responsiveness, inclusiveness and effectiveness in governance. In the current environment, there is concern about voter disillusionment and the consequent growing influence of “nondemocratic” political parties. These concerns may have been borne out by the January 2007 parliamentary elections; although pro-democratic parties won enough seats to form a governing coalition, the Radicals won the single largest block of seats in the new National Assembly. The increased voter turnout, which reversed a trend of declining citizen participation in elections, provides a measure of encouragement, but the Radicals continue to draw extensive support from the population.

## PPA Implementation: Overview of Institute Programs

### *IRI Programs*

Before 2000, IRI supported pro-reform political parties and student organizations through training and consultations to strengthen grassroots organizations and devise communication and coalition-building strategies. In the period leading up to the 2000 elections, IRI worked with opposition leaders to develop ways of increasing their voter identification capabilities and ability to influence the national political agenda, as well as working at the local level to strengthen opposition party branches. IRI worked with the democracy movement Otpor on peaceful resistance strategies and campaign branding. Many Otpor activists have taken these organizational and branding techniques to later work in political parties and government, and some have gone on to provide training in other countries.

In 2001, following the victory of the democratic opposition, IRI initiated a new set of programs to support the reform process at the national and local levels, including a program to strengthen political parties. (It also sought to support the government reform agenda, reform local government, and foster civic organizations.)

The current program focuses on strengthening the ability of parties to conduct political skills training internally, both by training internal party trainers and by providing technical support to party internal education departments. To enhance the regional-level training capacity of the Democratic Party of Serbia, IRI organized a series of training sessions with the party's educational department on grassroots campaigns and communication skills. IRI reports that one of the governing parties, the Serbian Renewal Movement, reformed its press office according to IRI's model. IRI also assisted the Democratic Party by testing several campaign messages for its presidential candidate in June 2004 and helped choose the winning campaign message: "Forward only!"

In September 2005, IRI conducted a baseline assessment of its four partner political parties, focused on developing party policy positions and communicating them to the public. This baseline supports ongoing work in this area.

IRI's current work, structured under a new cooperative agreement, is directed at a variety of areas, including policy and platform development, party communications, more effective governance by parties in municipalities, and greater inclusiveness. IRI notes, however, that the parliamentary elections held in January 2007 constrained some of these activities. Parties for the most part were not interested in comprehensive policy development in the period leading up to the elections, and the institute consciously shifted its programmatic focus to campaign assistance.<sup>101</sup>

IRI has also been conducting regular public opinion polling, contracting with local polling firms to carry out the polls under the direction of U.S.-based pollsters, as well as more targeted focus groups in specific regions or cities. To support the development of political party polling capacity, IRI endeavors to make its own polls available to political

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<sup>101</sup> IRI Quarterly Report to USAID, July-September 2006.

party leaders and the Serbian government as a basis for strategic planning. These consultations, offered to a variety of parties, constitute a significant portion of IRI's current activities.

### *NDI Political Party Assistance*

NDI first set up an office in Belgrade and began its support of political parties and civic groups in 1997, which has continued through three distinct phases. During the first phase of its program, from 1997 to 2000, NDI established its presence, offered political parties assistance with fairly rudimentary organizational development, and helped create the Center for Free Elections and Democracy (CeSID) as a credible, nonpartisan observer of elections. From March 1999 through Milosevic's removal in October 2000, during and after the NATO bombing of Serbia, NDI continued its work "in exile" in Budapest.

Once back in Belgrade, NDI began a second phase, from 2001 through 2003, in which it included parliament in its program, developed specialized programs for women and youth, and helped CeSID transition to non-electoral projects. However, Prime Minister Zoran Djindjic's assassination in 2003 and the parliamentary elections at year's end, which produced a stalemated government, halted the program's momentum.

In the program's third phase, from 2004 to the present, NDI has worked on the institutional development of political parties, extending its work to regional parties in Vojvodina, the Sandzak, and southern Serbia, and preparing parties for the 2007 parliamentary elections. Beyond PPA, NDI has aided the parliament to improve its legislative research capacity and its external outreach and helped CeSID plan for institutional sustainability.

NDI's work in Serbia has been directed to democratically oriented political parties. Working in large part through "regional trainers," the institute's objectives have been to help the country's democratic political parties (1) build sound organizations, (2) create electoral campaigns responsive to voter interests, (3) provide venues for women and youth to enter into and grow within party structures, and (4) help the parties create sustainable training centers.

### *Regional Trainers*

At the heart of much of NDI's political party assistance has been its "regional trainers." Beginning while based in Budapest, NDI assembled a group of five "regional trainers" who came to Budapest regularly for training on grassroots voter outreach, candidate preparation, message development and other election campaign fundamentals. They then returned to Serbia where they trained hundreds of activists from the Democratic Opposition of Serbia (DOS) coalition opposed to Milosevic's rule. The regional trainers became the backbone of NDI's political party assistance during this period and provided critical know-how and support to the impressive grassroots campaign around the October 2000 elections.



Even after returning to Belgrade in full force in late 2000, NDI continued the regional trainers program as a core piece in its political party development strategy. The group grew substantially, and now stands at 50 people, representing about 10 political parties. They provide training on election preparation, branch organization, internal party communication, media relations and external communication. Several regional trainers have started research and policy centers within their own parties, and, according to NDI, most have become recognized leaders within their parties.

### *1. Organizational Development*

NDI began its party support work in 1997 by assisting political parties in organizing their branches and connecting them to headquarters and each other. This was accomplished by multiple training seminars to individual party branches throughout Serbia, in which NDI offered training on office management, membership recruitment, issue surveys and other forms of voter outreach, and internal communication needs.

With national-level politics stifled under Milosevic's continuing authoritarian control and fissures among democratic opposition parties, NDI favored a focus on local organizing. As opposition parties gained control of local governments throughout Serbia the political center of gravity began to shift away from Belgrade. This work also proved critical in the 2000 election cycle, in which Milosevic largely controlled the airwaves and the democratic opposition had to use its branches to deploy a "ground game" of direct voter contact to secure votes. Parties have sustained direct voter contact by branches in subsequent national elections even though they have had full access to media.

### *2. Election Preparation*

As part of a comprehensive package of election-related assistance to its political party partners, NDI has provided training and technical assistance, material support (during the 2000 election cycle), public opinion research, foreign study trips, and a database of voting patterns.

- **Training and technical assistance.** NDI has offered assistance on campaign structure and strategy development, message development around issues, head-quarter-branch communication, candidate-selection procedures and candidate campaign training, door-to-door contact, phone banking and other forms of voter canvassing and get-out-the-vote efforts, and media relations. NDI has also trained on party pollwatching in most election cycles.
- **Material support.** NDI provided small amounts of equipment to democratic political parties during the 2000 presidential election campaign.
- **Public opinion research.** Starting with the 2000 election cycle, NDI, together with U.S.-based research firms, provided public opinion research to political parties to help focus their campaigns and to target their messages on particular issues to particular groups. NDI offered some guidance on how to focus campaign resources based on the research findings. It customized and shared analysis of polls

and focus groups through its program networks (party branches, women and youth wings, and NGO partners) to inform activists on how to engage their constituent base on particular issues of importance.

- **Voter database.** Before the December 2003 parliamentary elections, NDI initiated a project with CeSID statistical experts to create a database that enables analysis of election results down to the polling station level. NDI and CeSID have combined voting data and census figures to enable demographic profiles of precincts. According to NDI, parties have used the database to maximize and target voter outreach, NGOs have used the database to steer their nonpartisan get-out-the-vote strategies, and all program beneficiaries have used it to gain an empirical understanding of the results of previous elections and the context, from precinct to precinct, in which future elections will be contested. The database has also informed opinion research surveys, sampling and questionnaire design.
- **Study trips.** NDI has provided study trips for young political activists to travel to Poland, Slovakia and elsewhere to enable them to observe first-hand how political parties run campaigns in political environments that are firmly democratic but not too far removed from the environment in Serbia.

### *Women and Youth in Political Parties*

NDI has worked to build the skills and leadership capacity of women as political activists, candidates for office, and elected leaders. NDI has provided technical assistance and training for women and youth wings within parties, including on individual skills training (public speaking, negotiation and consensus-based decision making, a wide range of election-related skills development) and exposure to governance and parliamentary affairs. NDI has assisted women's groups inside parties to advocate successfully for statutory changes giving women leadership positions in party hierarchies, to reach out to women-oriented civic groups at the local level, and to support the genders affairs caucus in parliament on legislative agenda setting and strategies for pursuing legislative goals.

NDI has formed leadership development and political training venues for young members of Serbia's democratic parties, through summer schools, campaign simulation exercises, study trips to parliament and other governmental institutions, and in the creation of a Westminster-style debate club, in which members of different parties argue for and against a policy resolution. Past debates have occurred around the issue of Kosovo final status and the removal of obligatory military service. NDI believes these activities have brought a considerable number of young people into the political process.

### *Party Training Centers*

In 2006, both the Democratic Party (DS) and the Democratic Party of Serbia (DSS) established centers, staffed largely by NDI trainers, to coordinate and organize all activities related to the training of activists, officials and candidates of the party. By serving as clearinghouses for information and reports from local branches, these offices enhance parties' internal communication capacities and expedite voter targeting initiatives.

In one of its first initiatives, the DS training center led a comprehensive assessment of 26 local branches. The evaluation aimed to identify base and potential voters, update membership data, gather information on the local challenges facing each branch, and improve the demographic analysis of the party's support. Results highlighted the need for increased membership and volunteer recruitment, in addition to the need for party leadership to better clarify and disseminate a concise party platform and message. Schedules, locations, and agendas for cycles of NDI-led local branch workshops leading up to the parliamentary elections in January 2007 were based on the extensive information gathered from the research. Similarly, regional trainers from the DSS party training center conducted skills-development workshops in 40 local branches and 20 youth wings as part of a campaign effort to get-out-the-vote and encourage youth voters to support the party.

### **PPA in Serbia**

Over the past decade, political party assistance in Serbia seems to have been delivered effectively and the conditions for impact have been nearly ideal. As a result, such assistance has made a considerable contribution. Although neither party assistance nor outside efforts more broadly can really claim sole credit for bringing down Milosevic, PPA programs understandably do mark this as a major success. By all accounts, outside involvement, including political party assistance, certainly contributed, and current progress has its foundations in this earlier work.

The parties involved in PPA in Serbia all appear to have welcomed outside assistance. In particular, PPA has helped improve party organization and party campaigning. They have helped women create space for themselves and their issues within their political parties and have provided means for politically active youth to learn about democratic politics and to develop skills that will stand them in good stead as they grow into leadership positions. By consensus, however, PPA efforts in the area of governance have been more limited, and thus their impact has been much less.

Party assistance has focused considerable attention on election-related assistance. In part, this is because of the particular nature of Serbia's democratic transition, which has compelled a focus on parties' election readiness, both under Milosevic and afterward. Because the U.S. government's priority evidently has been to impede revanchist parties, USAID and the U.S. embassy have encouraged the party institutes to focus on elections and work with democratic parties. The frequency of elections in Serbia, at national and local levels, has created a continuous challenge as well as an opportunity for party assistance organizations to advance the "state of the art." Ongoing local elections, scheduled for various dates, provide a testing ground for new approaches.

Both institutes acknowledge that they have had less success, thus far, in areas such as policy development, legislative agenda setting, ethics in politics, and constituent relations. PPA programs have also done little to develop intra-party democracy. They have not intensively addressed such questions as candidate selection, the status of factions within the party, the informal power of party presidents or party purges.

Still, political party programming in Serbia has been evolving from electoral politics toward legislative politics and good governance. Serbia's political situation is such that elections remain central to the country's ability to advance in its democratic transition. Moving beyond Kosovo, the International Criminal Tribunal and other such issues and dismantling the still powerful vestiges of the Milosevic regime will afford the opportunity to tackle many of the critical governance issues that remain.

Diverse stakeholders recommended that, as part of a new emphasis on parties in governance, party assistance programs should consider new initiatives such as supporting policy expertise in parties and parliament to help the Serbian policy environment mature away from nationalist symbolic issues toward addressing more concrete issues that affect quality of life.

The team judged that strong leadership within the two party institutes in Serbia has been one major reason that these programmatic approaches appear to have yielded results. Cooperation among the Embassy, USAID and the party institutes also has been good. However, the shift in priorities from democracy and governance to economic growth, with the consequent reallocation of resources, has recently created some differences of opinion regarding the nature of the relationship between democratization and economic growth.

With the adoption of a new constitution in October 2006 and recent elections in January 2007, the need for PPA continues. The need to fill the "governance gap" created by the movement of key political parties actors into government will continue, with a need to complement new-generation efforts with a return to basics as democratic political parties rebuild. For more than a decade, under challenging conditions, USAID has pursued an elaborate, comprehensive PPA strategy in Serbia, and the party institutes have implemented it effectively. Given the difficult environment that continues to prevail, however, additional resources may be needed to achieve reasonable results by the planned "graduation date" for USAID in Serbia of 2012.

### **Desk Study Framework**

The following sections apply the structure/strategy/agency framework put forward in the literature review to Serbia. Following a brief overview of Serbia's political environment, we discuss how the empirics of the Serbian case either confirm or disconfirm widely held hypotheses of assistance and party promotion.

#### ***Serbia's Political Environment***

Serbia's political environment presents considerable challenges for democratic development in general and for political parties in particular. This environment ranks somewhere between the more hospitable environments of Central and Eastern Europe and the more hostile environments of Eurasia.

Questions of identity remain paramount in Serbian politics. Debates over the future status of Kosovo and, more precisely, which political party is best able to resolve the

Kosovo issue, Belgrade political scientist Dusan Pavlovic finds, defines Serbian politics.<sup>102</sup> Kosovo, Pavlovic argues, has “frozen” Serbian politics. Productive debates over economic development, social welfare provision, state decentralization and political reform—in short, the normal stuff of politics and the source of differentiation of political parties—cannot begin until the Kosovo issue is resolved.

The Kosovo question has produced a bifurcation of Serbia’s political space in which the familiar continuum of the political left and right has been replaced by a much narrower continuum defined, at one pole, by soft nationalism and, at the other pole, ultra nationalism. The current political environment seems to represent a regression from the more charged yet more differentiated political space of Milosevic-era Serbia before 2000. Whereas in the late 1990s the Democratic Opposition of Serbia (DOS) offered both national-identity and economic alternatives to the Milosevic regime, today’s political parties offer Serbian society little more than slightly differentiated nationalist slogans and promises.

While Pavlovic’s thesis finds considerable support in (1) the poorly developed party platforms among Serbian parties and (2) declining voter turnout in Serbia (until the most recent elections)—both outcomes consistent with the Kosovo “freeze” hypothesis—other political developments suggest Serbia’s political environment is more dynamic than the occluding dialogue of nationalism and ultra-nationalism might suggest. This is not to say that Kosovo has not narrowed Serbian political space, as Pavlovic convincingly argues, but rather, that some differentiation, likely important, does exist in both the capacity and the message of Serbian political parties. In short, Democracy International’s field research reveals that Serbian political parties are attempting to define themselves along economic, social welfare and European integrationist lines and that foreign assistance, as party elites themselves report, has encouraged them to build distinct political identities.

### *Hypothesis Testing—Serbia and the Broader Assistance Literature*

Democracy International’s review of the political science and applied policy literatures suggests several possible causal links between assistance and political party development. The Serbian case study allows preliminary testing of several of these causal explanations. Encouragingly, we find that structural variables, though important, are not determinative of political party assistance success or failure. Similarly encouraging, we find that well-designed assistance can increase the capacity of political parties. Somewhat more problematic, though, field research does suggest that actor agency—including donors and implementers as well as domestic political elites themselves—can prove detrimental to party development.

#### *Structural Variables*

The Kosovo question, as discussed above, has narrowed the political space for parties in Serbia. Nevertheless, Kosovo as a structural constraint has not had a universally leveling effect on political parties. For example, although the Socialist and Radical parties in Ser-

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<sup>102</sup> Team discussions with Dusan Pavlovic, Belgrade, September 2006.

bia favor continued or increased state control over the economy, other parties, most notably G17, are explicit in their support of market reform and EU integration. Other parties have sought to differentiate themselves on questions of social justice. Thus, the Democratic Party champions “socially endangered populations,” while the Democratic Party of Serbia favors a “National Investment Plan” that, with revenues gained through the privatization of state owned telecommunications and banks, promises improvements to education, health and transportation. In short, although the issue of Kosovo has imposed a degree of conformity with regard to national identity politics, it has not prevented substantive differentiation of economic policies.

The difference among party economic policies is most striking at the local level. G17, DS, DSS and the Renewal Movement (SPO) all noted in interviews with Democracy International that the Kosovo question is inconsequential in local politics and, rather, that economic interests—and perceptions of which party can best further these interests—best predict voting behavior in municipal and regional elections. As such, political parties have begun carefully targeting the regions, studying local public opinion, and building district-level electoral databases so as to best mobilize this population. This reality suggests a refinement of structural hypotheses is in order. That is, while structural constraints—be they questions of national identity, low levels of economic development, or geographic distance from Brussels—may narrow the discourse of national level politics, political parties and their competing platforms remain critical at the local, grassroots level. In short, the future of Serbian party development may lie in the backwoods, not Belgrade.

### *Strategies*

Western assistance strategies have aided this local process of party formation. For example, as discussed above NDI and CeSID have made the detailed database of district-level electoral returns available to their partner parties and have provided Cluster Analysis Training so that political parties might better identify local constituencies. Representatives from all the parties with whom the team spoke praised the NDI/CeSID database and training. They attributed local electoral victories—often unexpected victories—to the use of this database and to NDI and IRI’s emphasis on door-to-door campaigning.

Considerably more mixed, our conversations with USAID, NDI and IRI representatives in Belgrade suggest, has been the US embassy’s reprioritization of Strategic Objectives in Serbia. The U.S. Mission in Serbia has consistently pursued three goals in post-Milosevic Serbia: democratization, conflict mitigation and economic growth. Under the leadership of the current U.S. ambassador, however, the Mission has substantially deemphasized assistance for democracy and governance while increasing U.S. aid for economic development. Because of these cuts, NDI and IRI have trimmed their international and local staffs, have reduced the frequency of their training sessions, and have cancelled several initiatives.



### *Actor Agency*

Actor agency is perhaps the greatest challenge to party development in Serbia. While structural constraints are surmountable, particularly at the local level, and party assistance strategies, on the whole, have proven effective, effective political party consolidation demands that political elites perceive building party capacity as in their own interests. As is the case in other formerly communist countries, political parties in Serbia remain vehicles for elite self-promotion. As Joel Migdal finds in the Africa case, so too in Serbia the interests of accumulating personal power and building party capacity often come into conflict. That is, so as to safeguard personal power, political elites may actively undermine potential threats emanating from within the party.

The Serbian case has many of the characteristics of such personalized “politics of political survival.” Although the elites with whom we spoke never directly criticized their party’s leader, they did note high cadre turnover and an unwavering intolerance for internal party factions and dissent. One often-cited example of this preoccupation with power and desire to ensure loyalty are pre-signed resignation statements; party leaders require prospective legislators to sign a resignation statement before assuming their seat so that the party leader might easily dismiss or, better yet, deter renegade MPs. Ultimately, Western party assistance must develop strategies to address this high personalization of politics if assistance is to achieve further reform and consolidation of Serbian political parties.

Another agency barrier to party development in Serbia is the relative prominence of anti-Western, anti-democratic parties. Both the Socialists and the Radicals have significant representation in the National Assembly, with the Radicals taking nearly 29 percent of the vote in the 2007 parliamentary elections, the largest vote for any party. With such a large swath of the Serbian political spectrum occupied by non-democratic elements, the continued need to focus on electoral assistance at the expense of organizational and governance programs may hamper the further development of the democratic parties and the eventual marginalization of the others

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