

**Introduction at Westminster Foundation for Democracy Conference
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by
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Context

1. The recently committed deadly attacks of fundamentalist groups at western democracies are wake-up calls for the need to defend and deepen our democracies and to be far more efficient and focused on the promotion of democracy elsewhere in the world.

For too long, the international community has advocated free trade and open global markets as the main vehicles for economic development to overcome the intense poverty divide in this world. This approach has failed to deliver. In fact, poverty has become further entrenched at the African, Latino and Asian continents. The introduction of good governance into the equation of international cooperation has done little to arrest the decline in which many states around the globe find themselves today, to the extent that the group of failed states continues to increase.

The new paradigm advanced by professor Amartya Sen that is gaining increased recognition is the approach that states should not become fit *for* democracy but *through* democracy. Democracy is the system of governance that creates the conditions for sustainable socio and economic development. Although the debate about the precise sequence of what comes first is likely to rage on among academics, it is safe to assume that political reforms aimed at creating or consolidating democracy should be pursued in tandem with economic reforms aimed at reducing poverty.

Anything short of this two pillar approach is likely to be unsustainable. International cooperation needs to be drastically overhauled to reflect this new paradigm and this conference is a timely opportunity to reflect on this need and on the lessons learned in this regard.

2. Winning a war - that is a conventional war - is far easier than winning the peace. This wisdom emerged from the lessons learned in Bosnia Herzegovina, Kosovo, Haiti, Liberia, Afghanistan, Iraq and so on. Winning the peace is investing in nation-building. But what does that entail? What are the approaches, what are the issues, what are the processes that bring about nations that are based on a people governed through a political system that manages the interests of its people peacefully? Promoting democracy is supporting the process of nation building and needs to be reviewed in that context. It is, therefore, more than the sum of supporting individual projects.

Democracy support became fashionable during the early nineties following the collapse of the Berlin Wall and the successful transitions in South Africa and the return to democracy in Chile. The first focus was directed at support for elections. Many countries introduced regular elections without democracy taking root. The Russian presidential elections of last Sunday only illustrate this point. When this was realized the emphasis shifted towards strengthening civil society, the rule of law and to governance (defined as managing state resources efficiently and honestly). In fact, the list of topics that should be tackled to enhance democracy is gradually increasing, including the latest increasing international interest for supporting political parties.

We, by and large, know what the elements are that make up a democracy. However, we know little about in what mix, through what process and how that can be supported by the international community. These are questions that make supporting democracy a special skill and profession. This recognizes the observation by Alexis de Tocqueville in his standard work 'Democracy in America' that "The cultural principles, traditions and habits of a society are just as important for democracy as the laws.

The often exclusive emphasis on elections has created the perception that democracy equals the competition for power. Going around the emerging democracies in the world one often finds political parties merely electioneering machines to consolidate or to obtain power. Yet, democracy is more than competition alone, it is also the skill to find accommodation and reconciliation of different interests.

3. A core lesson that I learned in fifteen years of practice in promoting democracy is the facilitation of dialogue among the key stakeholders in the political and economic development of countries. Democracy cannot be exported if it is to be sustainable. What can be done by outsiders is to facilitate processes of dialogue aimed at bringing the players together with the objectives to draft agendas or roadmaps for establishing and consolidating democracy. These dialogues are part of the process of nation building and are at the same time capacity building exercises for the leaders participating in these dialogues. These dialogues create peaceful conditions for antagonists (while democracy results in the peaceful management of conflicts of interests, the process of democratization itself often contributes to instability and requires leaders to exercise restraint to avoid violent conflict) to pursue the common interest of the country and as such can be seen as mechanisms to manage conflicts peacefully. Dialogues drove the change processes successfully in Central and East Europe, as well as in South Africa and Chile.

Through such dialogues it can be assured that the national stakeholders are the owners of the reform process that are required, while the outcome of these processes provide the big pictures that the international community requires to know in order to usefully support the process. It is a simple truth, but far too often neglected in the practice of international cooperation, that if we act on the wrong analysis or no analysis at all, we are pursuing the wrong interventions with all its negative implications. That analysis should not be made by outside consultants, but should result from national dialogue processes. That is how democracy grows and takes root.

IMD approach

4. The Institute for Multiparty Democracy was established in 2001 and came into operation two years ago. Its Board of Directors is made up of representatives of seven political parties represented in Dutch Parliament, including three parties that are in government and four that are in opposition.

As an organization of political parties the mandate of IMD is to support political parties in young or emerging democracies as a contribution to establish and consolidate multiparty democracy. The participating political parties decided to jointly cooperate on the implementation of this mandate realizing that:

- Democracy is often promoted without taking political parties into account;
- Democracy does not exist without political parties;
- Political parties generally perform badly;
- Reproduction of our political parties abroad proved not to work;

- Working together allowed bringing resources together the sum of which can make a difference;
- Working together also provides the opportunity for a coherent country analysis about how democracy can best be supported;
- The joint responsibility for implementing the mandate provides the message that parties can and should work together for the common good;

5. In two years time, IMD has established programmes in thirteen countries where we cooperate with all political parties represented in parliament and sometimes beyond. We work with nine countries on the African continent, three on the Latin American continent and one in South-East Asia. Kenya is the latest country in which we reached an agreement about a programme framework with the political parties, whereas we are exploring possibilities to cooperate with the OSCE on a programme for Georgia. In each of the countries we operate on the basis that democracy is a long term process, hence IMD is prepared to enter and commit for the long haul. We focus on programmes rather than projects and are willing, when partnerships mature, to enter into multi-annual commitments.

6. The average country budget is in the range of € 400.000 - € 500.000 annually. Most programmes work without local offices through locally available institutions or capacities. In only two countries we operate with offices, while we have a regional representative in Southern Africa because of the number of countries in our programme in that region. The IMD budget expanded to € 5 million in 2003 and will rise to € 7,5 million in 2004 and € 10 million in 2006. IMD receives institutional funding from the Dutch government on the basis of our four year programme 2003 – 2006.

The Board of IMD is free in its decisions about the application of the funds within the framework of the four year programme, with the exception of the country choices that require ministerial approval. Once or twice a year IMD and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs organize a policy dialogue about the developments in IMD's programme. The relationship is a positive example of how subsidiarity between the government and the private sector can be practised. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs considers the IMD programme to be part of its core foreign policy business without exerting direct influence over its implementation.

Each year, IMD organizes external audits of two of its country programmes. During 2003 the programmes in Mozambique and Guatemala were evaluated and assessed, while in 2004 the programmes in Ghana and Bolivia will be evaluated.

The IMD mandate is implemented through a framework agreement with the political parties about the priorities and modalities of the new partnership. This framework and the modalities are carefully negotiated with all the political parties involved.

These frameworks often have two main foci in common: one is the joint-activities or interparty programme and the other is the bilateral programme aimed at strengthening the institutional development of the individual parties.

The joint-activities programme is aimed at enhancing the joint responsibility for the establishment and consolidation of multiparty democracy (with a focus on the party system) while the bilateral programme focuses on assisting parties in developing from personality parties into policy oriented parties.

The mix of the two depends on the state of democracy in the particular country. In Tanzania for example, where the democratic reform process is dominated by the governing party, the emphasis during the first two years was laid on strengthening individual parties. To create a more tolerant political environment we facilitated two national television and radio debates for the leaders of the individual parties. The first debate was on poverty reduction strategies, the second on privatization. That had never happened before and these policy debates aroused huge interest in Tanzania. The confidence that has been established through the programme resulted in a meeting convened by IMD with the leaders of all political parties represented in the Tanzanian parliament to assess the partnership and to look forward.

I am happy to report that this meeting, for which the participants choose the opposition leader as its chair, resulted in the decision among the political parties in Tanzania to consolidate this round-table into a forum of political parties that will decide about a joint work programme for which the purposes and topics have already been identified. The SG of the ruling party CCM called for the forum in order to change the political culture in his country that has been dominated for many decades by de jure and de facto one-party rule. With the general elections scheduled for 2005 the opposition leaders were pleasantly surprised when the CCM SG suggested a discussion about constitutional reform as the topic for the next national television and radio debate. This is a significant opening for dialogue about a subject that has been taboo for quite some time.

The political dynamics in Kenya are such that the political parties immediately agreed to establish cooperation amongst themselves with a view to develop a common agenda for implementing the new constitution and subsequent law on political parties. Democracy has been in the making in Kenya over the past two years and should culminate in a new constitution that has largely been driven by over 600 representatives from all districts in Kenya. The political parties have resolved to establish a Center for Multiparty Democracy that will develop the joint party programme and the framework for bilateral party support. Hence, the mix between the two shall be applied from the very start of the cooperation like it has been in Ghana. In Mozambique the programme still operates very much on a bilateral basis with a slowly increasing share of the joint activities programme.

The support for the bilateral programmes is increasingly focusing on assisting the political parties to draft their own longer-term strategic plans. What does it take to become a political party and to move from the current situation to the new one. The strategic plans will in the future become the basis for prioritizing our bilateral assistance. That assistance shall be performance based. Those parties meeting their own targets as established in the strategic plans will qualify for continued and additional support, or the support will fade out and/or stopped. The outcome of this choice depends on the determination of the leadership of the party.

7. Local ownership of the programmes is essential for its impact and contribution to the democratization process and for the sustainability of the process itself. The party platforms that are generated through the partnerships with IMD have become the drivers of the activities and the process. As the SG of the NPP, the governing party in Ghana recently observed, the programme has become much 'bigger' than anyone anticipated at its start and he was not referring to the funds involved.

The party platforms or forums are supported by local agencies where they are available (like in Ghana) or through agencies established by the parties themselves (like in Bolivia and Kenya). In most of the countries we have engaged local consultants with sufficient qualifications and impartial standing with the full spectrum of the political parties. The programmes are financially audited by independent local auditing firms.

8. The parties cooperating within IMD each second staff to IMD, cooperating in country teams that are responsible for the management of the different country partnership programmes. The political party staff is in particular responsible for analyzing the political dynamics within our partner countries, analyze the requests for specific expertise that is required and find qualified trainers or mentors and, finally, provide feedback about the programmes to the Dutch political parties to guarantee that the IMD programme is well rooted in the Dutch political parties.

9. IMD invests considerable energy in collaboration with other partners in the countries in which we operate. IMD has joint programmes with UNDP, OAS, and NDI. We cooperate as much as possible with political party foundations in countries with shared interests. Apart from the support provided by the Dutch government, we hope to cooperate in future with other bilateral donors as well.

Some preliminary results

10. The most tangible outcomes so far are the strengthening of the parties' organizations and administrations, the internal party democracy, the policy capacity of the parties, the capacity to relate to the media, and the training of party cadres. For the first time, many parties are able to link up with their constituencies, convene regional meetings and convene party congresses. The activities generally appear to contribute to the parties' assertiveness and self-confidence.

11. In the run up to general elections in Ghana this year, the party platform has focused all its activities towards contributing to a level playing field, to improve the capacities of the individual parties and to improve the prevailing negative perception of the political parties amongst the Ghanaian population. For that purpose a number of joint seminars are organized throughout the country that draw high attendances of followers of the various parties, joint media appearances are organized and conflict resolution mechanisms to prevent violence are established in collaboration with civil society organizations.

Recently, the parties intervened publicly when the President announced the establishment of a separate procurement commission for election materials effectively taking this function away from the independent electoral commission. The platform of political parties, consisting of the SG's of the parties and assisted by their policy analysts, considered this to be a derogation of the democratization process in Ghana. The intervention was highly successful. After three days the government rescinded on its decision and returned the mandate to the electoral commission.

The platform has gained a level of significance that recently resulted in the party chairpersons constituting a chairmen caucus for discussions about important political interests.

12. In Guatemala, following eighteen months of weekly dialogue meetings between representatives of the 21 political parties, covering the full political spectrum, the SG's of all the parties signed last October, mid-stream highly charged general elections that took place mid-November, a so-called Shared National Agenda. This agenda constitutes a very comprehensive policy programme covering all sensitive areas that Guatemala faces in consolidating peace and

democracy. The general elections unfolded in a peaceful and free environment, resulting in the election of a new government and the voting out of office of the former dictator Rios Montt. The Shared National Agenda has meanwhile been accepted as the Governability Pact for the new government, providing the benchmarks for the Consultative Group on Guatemala. The agenda has also been accepted as the legislative agenda for the newly elected Congress, giving priority to a new electoral law to address the fragmentation in the political system and the exclusion of a large part of the indigenous population. Another priority is the reform of the tax system, aiming at increasing the currently very low income tax paid by the Guatemalan elite. The focus of the current programme is on the implementation of the agenda and secondly on institutional development support to the parties elected into the Congress.

13. The democratization process in Southern Africa is marked by dominant governing parties and weak opposition parties. Where the dominant parties are seriously challenged the democratization process is likely to suffer as happened in Zimbabwe. IMD together with some South African partners, facilitated a Southern African regional conference that brought together the governing and opposition parties from a number of SADC countries. The conference considered the challenges ten years after the landmark 1994 elections in South Africa that “voted apartheid out and democracy in”.

The nexus between democracy and development and between the dominant governing parties and the opposition parties were the main outcomes of the conference. IMD will continue to facilitate dialogue between the governing and opposition parties in the SADC region from the perspective of increasing the democratic space in this region.

Challenges

14. In most of the countries in which IMD operates the balance between stability and instability is fragile. Polarization and fragmentation among political parties and between political parties is often very high. Can international partners cooperate in supporting joint agendas or roadmaps generated by the political parties themselves? Can they cooperate in aligning their assistance to individual parties along the priorities as identified in the strategic programmes of the individual parties?

15. Political parties are often non-existing institutions or very fragile institutions at an early stage in their institutional development. This new found category of key stakeholders in the political reform processes can easily be overwhelmed by the new attention and resources coming their way. Although that is positive, how can it be avoided that this assistance becomes counterproductive?

16. IMD operates on a strictly impartial basis working both with governing and opposition parties or groupings, acknowledging that for peaceful democratization processes one needs both sides of the equation. Others however argue that it would be more effective to focus support on the opposition parties as the fastest route to democracy. IMD only accepts this approach in blatant cases of undemocratic behaviour of the governing party. But where does one draw the line in this regard?

17. IMD receives more requests for programmes than it can responsibly handle at this stage of its institutional development. Requests for assistance from failed states like Afghanistan, Iraq, Angola and Sudan form a distinct challenge. In the aftermath of war, how soon can one meaningfully start with supporting the formation of political parties? What are the specific problems that arise in these situations? How can the cooperation between the different political foundations be enhanced to address these substantial challenges?

18. In our work we often encounter often a tremendously unproductive mistrust between political parties and civil society organizations. How can this mistrust be overcome? How do we avoid contributing to this mistrust?

19. We cannot export democracy, yet we want to promote democracy. IMD tries to organize its partnerships with the participating political parties on a 100% ownership basis. Nevertheless, the fact that we enter into partnership means intervention into the local dynamics. With these interventions we are raising expectations. Are we prepared to see these interventions through, are we also willing to accept the implications also when the circumstances regress?

20. Our partners in young democracies regularly question where Europe stands with regard to promoting and assisting processes of democratisation. While it is recognized that democracy is one of the underlying values on which the European Union is based and support for democracy has been integrated into all EU agreements with third party countries, the assertion is that Europe has not yet developed a distinct identity and the instruments needed for being an effective partner in democracy assistance. Parallel to the Dutch Presidency of the European Union, which will commence on July 1st, 2004, the IMD will host, a European wide conference entitled *A European Profile in Democracy Assistance*, which will take place in The Hague on July 5th and 6th, 2004 (Please see: <http://www.democracyagenda.org>). During this conference the European NGO's will pose Why, What and How questions regarding their work in democracy assistance abroad to further a European profile. The conference is intended to result into an agenda working towards the enhancement of a European profile in democracy assistance. But will through such an enhanced European profile also develop a stronger network of European agencies for the increasingly important challenge of making democracy work?

There remains much to be learned in promoting democracy. Reflection meetings of this nature are much valued by ourselves and I hope that it will resolve in increased professionalism among the practitioners in the field of democracy support.

Thank you!