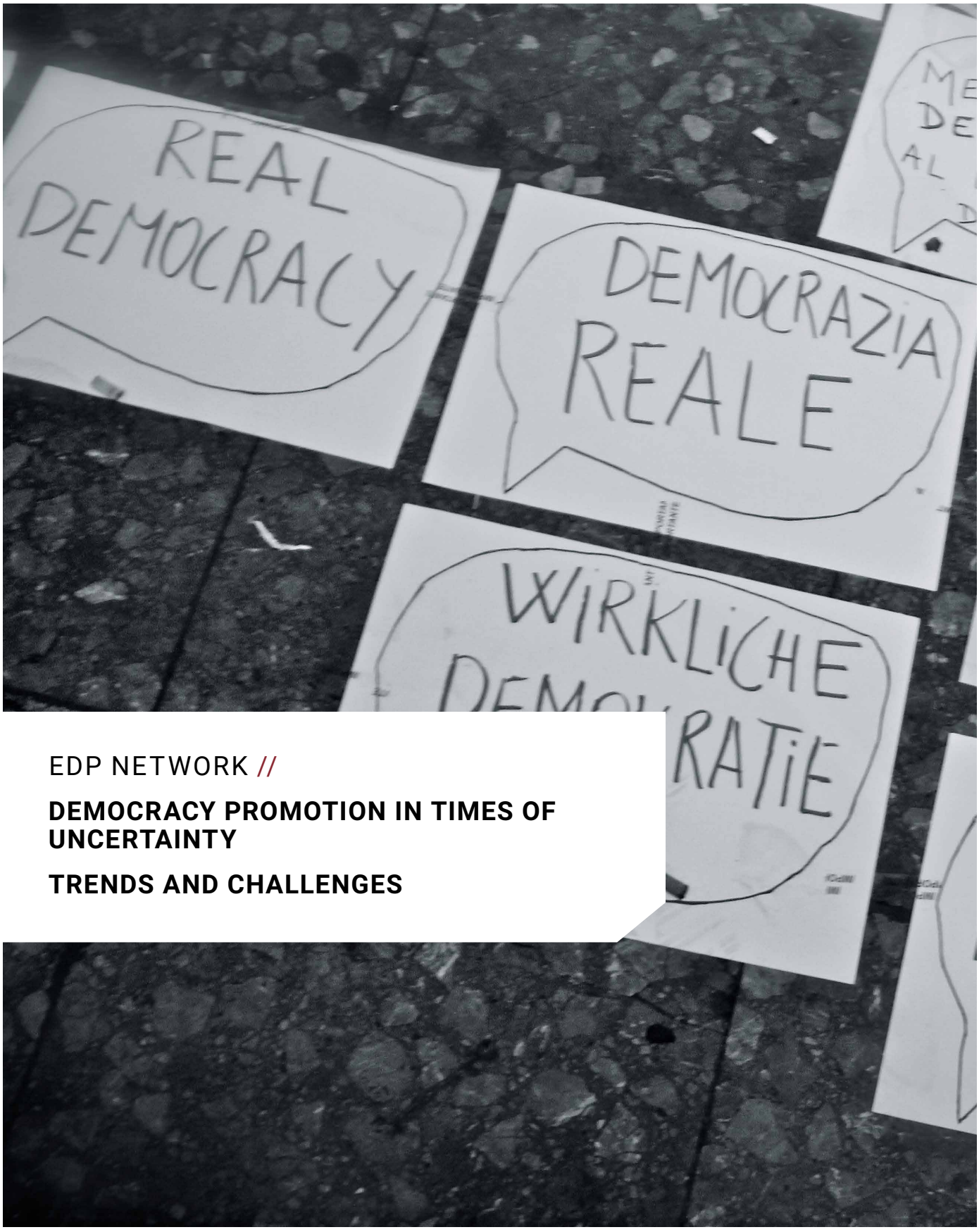
Democracy Promotion in Times of Uncertainty: Trends and Challenges

13/2018

PRIF REPORT

PEACE RESEARCH INSTITUTE FRANKFURT / LEIBNIZ-INSTITUT HESSISCHE STIFTUNG FRIEDENS- UND KONFLIKTFORSCHUNG



EDP NETWORK //

DEMOCRACY PROMOTION IN TIMES OF UNCERTAINTY

TRENDS AND CHALLENGES

PRIF Report 13/2018

DEMOCRACY PROMOTION IN TIMES OF UNCERTAINTY

TRENDS AND CHALLENGES

EDP NETWORK //

IMPRINT

We gratefully acknowledge the funding of the EDP network by the German Leibniz Association under the Leibniz Competition 2015–2018.

LEIBNIZ-INSTITUT HESSISCHE STIFTUNG FRIEDENS- UND KONFLIKTFORSCHUNG (HSFK)
PEACE RESEARCH INSTITUTE FRANKFURT (PRIF)

Correspondence to:
Peace Research Institute Frankfurt
Baseler Straße 27–31
D-60329 Frankfurt am Main
Telephone: +49 69 95 91 04-0
E-Mail: poppe@hsfk.de
https://www.prif.org

ISBN: 978-3-946459-41-5

This PRIF Report is a joint policy paper written by members of the research network "External Democracy Promotion" (EDP Network), which is currently funded by the Leibniz Association and coordinated at PRIF. All network members have weighed in to share their specific expertise on the current state of democracy promotion either in terms of particularly relevant contexts or in terms of important actors and regions.

For quite some time now, academia and policy circles have debated what has been termed a democratic recession and a backlash against democracy promotion, while mutterings of the end of Francis Fukuyama's "end of history" have resonated widely. Recent events, including the election of Donald Trump as the president of the United States, the rise of illiberal rightwing forces across Europe, and political developments in major Southern democracies such as Brazil, India, and South Africa, have only exacerbated this pessimistic mood. However, many established practices of international democracy promotion up to now continue relatively unscathed by these trends. Where do we currently stand, in terms of democracy promotion in general in today's world, with regard to traditional key promoters such as the European Union and the United States, as well as with regard to those regions that have been the main recipients of democracy promotion? And what do recent developments mean, we wonder, for the field of study that we have devoted so much work to? This report aims at giving a concise and pointed overview of the key trends and challenges that characterize the field of international democracy promotion – in the hope of providing perspective and offering points of reflection for practitioners, academics and all those interested in the global state and future of democracy. It is based on the research that network members have been conducting, both individually and collectively, as well as on the many discussions that we have had at our regular network meetings.

The introduction to the report outlines current trends and challenges that democracy promotion policy is confronted with, and it offers general recommendations for dealing with these challenges based on the following chapters, which analyze contextual factors, actors, and regions. The second chapter reflects upon the current debate on trends towards autocratization and democratic backsliding and reminds us that, while a gradual decline in civil liberties and the rule of law is indeed worrisome, no broader trend of a decline of democracy can be detected. A third chapter further explores the disconcerting trends subsumed under the term "shrinking civic spaces." It concludes that, while the *operational* response to the manifold restrictions on civil society space has been somewhat successful, external democracy promoters have not yet adequately dealt with the *normative* challenges nor developed a coherent *political* response. A fourth chapter finds that functional cooperation might serve as a long-term and rather subtle strategy for indirectly promoting democracy but is indeed beset by problems similar to those that more traditional forms of direct democracy promotion are facing.

The following two chapters explore the European Union and the United States, the two most important traditional governmental democracy promoters. In analyzing where they currently stand and what can and should be expected of them, the chapters show that the goal of democracy promotion has further lost significance on the respective foreign policy agendas and it is not clear to what extent policymakers have the will and the ability to resuscitate it in the medium to long term. The final four chapters look at four world regions where democracy promotion has been an important factor during the last two decades: the Arab World, Sub-Saharan Africa, post-Soviet countries, and Latin America.

These regions have all been affected, to differing degrees, by the challenges democracy promotion is facing (outlined below and in the introduction). The authors agree that the loss of credibility of democracy promoters is palpable across the board and is often accompanied by a diminished will and ability to pursue democracy promotion which needs to be addressed. The authors' assessments of how best to respond to the lack of successful democracy promotion in the respective regions, however, differ. The responses discussed here are diverse and range across focusing on democratic essentials only, a preference for functional cooperation, a focus on prioritizing bottom-up strategies, to a more assertive normative positioning of donor countries.

In sum, the report shows that there is no need to be alarmist. Democracy is certainly in crisis in many countries around the world and, overall, negative trends have clearly outweighed positive ones in the last decade; but the breakdown of democratic regimes is still a relatively rare phenomenon, and the end of democracy as we know it is not in sight. Similarly, despite the backlash and retreat, international democracy promotion is (still) characterized by important continuities – and is, thus, for the time being here to stay. Still, the analyses collected in this report do reveal substantial problems that call for significant adjustments to the established conceptualization and practice of international democracy promotion.

In sum, we show that international democracy promotion is currently challenged:

- On the 'donor' side:
    - by a lack of credibility
    - by a lack of political will and leverage
- On the 'recipient' side:
    - by increasing resistance (e.g. against external interference) and/or lack of political will
    - by a lack of capacity (e.g., in the contexts of fragile states, regime hybridity and/or violent conflicts)
- In the global context:
    - by competing actors that reduce the leverage of democracy promoters
    - by a reduced legitimacy/attractiveness of democracy as a model/template for political development

Responding adequately to these challenges is clearly not easy. General recommendations in light of the more specific challenges that the chapters address are summarized in the introduction and include the following: There is a need for donors and scholars alike to reconceptualize international democracy promotion as a reflexive and interactive practice which allows for actual space to debate and negotiate between all relevant stakeholders. For the purpose of finding the most suitable approach in each concrete case, democracy promoters need to pay more attention to careful context-sensitive analyses. In terms of their own role in this policy endeavor, democracy promoters should try to rebuild their lost credibility and restore the power of their example as democracies. Finally, they also need to respond better to recent trends, such as new forms of civic activism, and align their policies accordingly.

CONTENTS

1. DEMOCRACY PROMOTION IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Annika E. Poppe, Solveig Richter and Jonas Wolff

1.1 THE CURRENT SITUATION: DISSOLUTION OF CERTAINTIES ABOUT DEMOCRACY PROMOTION

In recent years, we have witnessed a number of global developments that bode ill for international democracy promotion – a policy that arguably enjoyed its heyday in the 1990s and became a key concern for many established democracies and international organizations. Since the mid-2000s, scholars have started to observe a global democratic recession and a backlash against democracy promotion. In the meantime, the situation has not improved, to say the least: in both academia and policy circles, current debates center on the rise of assertive autocracies and the diffusion and cooperation of authoritarian regimes, analyze the global wave of restrictions on civil society organizations and international civil society support ("closing/shrinking space", see Poppe/Wolff in this report), and discuss the increasingly worrying trends of political polarization, backsliding and democratic erosion even in supposedly consolidated democracies, including in the United States and within the European Union (see Gerschewski in this report). At the same time, global assessments of the state of democracy in the world show that there is not an outright wave of autocratization: in quite a few countries we can still observe democratic progress, and all around the world there are certainly people struggling for democracy and human rights. On balance, however, international democracy promotion not only faces serious challenges and outright resistance in those countries that are on the receiving end, but is simultaneously undermined by serious problems on the side of key democracy promoters.

Against this background, this PRIF report takes stock of key challenges and trends in international democracy promotion with an emphasis on the two key governmental actors in democracy promotion and the traditional world regions receiving democracy aid. The overall question is where the policy of democracy promotion is headed in the future – if anywhere: what form can and should adequate responses take in light of the changed circumstances? Three challenges and how they are dealt with are particularly relevant in this regard:

(1) Challenged legitimacy of democracy and its promotion

Even if public opinion polls suggest that, broadly speaking, democracy is still the preferred form of government for a majority of people in most countries around the world, the specific model of liberal democracy has lost appeal for citizens governed by authoritarian as well as democratic regimes, and explicitly non-democratic ideas are also on the rise.[1] A number of factors have contributed to this. Whereas democracy was once equated with economic success and prosperity, political stability, and a high level of human rights standards, recent developments have highlighted how even established

1 See, e.g., Pew Research Center 2017: Globally, Broad Support for Representative and Direct Democracy. But many also endorse nondemocratic alternatives, http://assets.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2017/10/17102729/Pew-Research-Center_Democracy-Report_2017.10.16.pdf.

democracies are struggling. The world economic crisis has severely shaken the foundations of democratic states, while some authoritarian states, most notably China, continue to thrive economically. Resurgent right-wing movements and successful attempts at dismantling important elements of liberal democratic frameworks in the United States as well as some European countries have sullied the image of democracy. The European Union's handling of, first, the crisis of the Eurozone and, then, the so-called recent 'migration crisis' has further contributed to diminishing its power as a role model. Two wars in Afghanistan and Iraq supposedly fought in the name of democracy by the United States and its allies have significantly undermined the legitimacy of democracy promotion as an international practice. A long-held assumption, albeit always controversial, is now severely and openly contested: This is the assumption that there are established democratic regimes that respect high democratic standards at home and are therefore able and normatively entitled to support countries on their path of "catch-up development." In fact, the phenomenon of democratic contestation and erosion "at home" suggests that democracy-promoting countries are themselves increasingly worthwhile "targets" of democracy promotion.

(2) Diminished political will and political leverage on the donor side

The increasing struggle over, if not erosion of, democracy within many established democracies is combining at the international level with the much-discussed return of geopolitics and hard power. As a result, formerly active donor countries have become less enthusiastic. Their attention has turned away from promoting democracy and human rights, as many established democracies – even more than previously – give priority to other foreign policy and development goals and interests such as stabilization. Moreover, to the extent that state actors are still engaged on behalf of democracy, they are often faced with competing actors who offer engagement (investments, aid, economic partnership) with no political strings attached. China, again, is the most notable case in this regard. Overall, the credibility, the normative appeal, and the ability as well as political will of self-declared democracy promoters have clearly diminished (see Grimm and Poppe in this report).

(3) Increasing skepticism, contestation, and resistance on the recipient side

On the other side of the equation, lately "recipients" too have turned their backs on democracy promotion. Across all world regions, countries that had previously welcomed or at least tacitly accepted international democracy promotion are no longer willing to do so. This "pushback" against democracy promotion, which can be observed in around 60 countries, is probably here to stay – it constitutes the "new normal" (see Poppe/Wolff in this report).[2] As a result, while democracy promotion is needed more than ever from a normative standpoint, there are fewer and fewer places where it is welcome. Moreover, even in places where that is still the case, liberal democracy, as the long-presumed almost universal template upon which democracy promotion policy is based, often encounters significant degrees of contestation. As scholars have reminded us recently, democracy is an essentially contested concept – and, going further, this contestability is of key relevance when it comes to designing

2 Thomas Carothers/Saskia Brechenmacher 2014: Closing Space. Democracy and Human Rights Support Under Fire, Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 31.

and implementing democracy promotion policies.[3] This means that liberal democracy understood as "constitutional, representative, individualistic, voluntaristic, privatistic, functionally limited, political democracy as practiced within nation-states"[4] no longer offers a relatively clear-cut, hegemonic template that can, basically, be taken for granted as the conceptual basis for democracy promotion. It has become obvious that democracy cannot simply be promoted but has to be negotiated, including at the very basic level of fundamental normative premises and moral beliefs.

In light of these challenges, the promotion of democracy as a strategy and an instrument of foreign and development policy is uncertain. To a previously unknown extent, *who* should promote democracy, *where* it should be promoted, and *what* exactly should be promoted are open questions — and thus previous core assumptions that have traditionally guided democracy promotion are now seriously contested.

1.2 WHAT CAN BE DONE? TOWARDS RECONCEPTUALIZING DEMOCRACY PROMOTION

How are democracy promoters responding to these challenges? As the individual contributions to this report document, many of the established practices of democracy promotion "on the ground" are continuing, in spite of the turmoil surrounding them at the level of national and international politics. There are certainly pragmatic adaptations as objectives are redefined and instruments revised, the result, mostly, being a shift towards less transformative agendas (that, for instance, aim at "stability" or "resilience"). However, such a rather technocratic response is not sufficient in light of the dissolution of certainties that affect the fundamentals of international democracy promotion. So what can be done? In summarizing key recommendations debated in the following chapters this policy report identifies four overall guidelines that should be considered when designing democracy promotion policies in the 21st century:

(1) *Donors and scholars should reconceptualize international democracy promotion as a reflexive and interactive practice*, in which the very aim itself (that is, democracy) is subject to deliberation and negotiation. In line with the Agenda 2030 in general and Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16 in particular, democracy promotion should be conceptualized as a two-way street, in which there are no passive "recipients" but only agents whose values and preferences have to be heard and taken seriously. This also concerns the very definition of the normative horizon towards which the promotion of "responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making" should be working, as one of the targets of SDG 16 puts it. Obviously though, this raises the important question of what a non-negotiable core of democracy promotion might be and at what point democracy promotion no longer deserves the name.

---

3 Milja Kurki 2013: Democratic Futures: Re-Visioning Democracy Promotion, Abingdon: Routledge.

4 Philippe C. Schmitter: A Sketch of What A 'Post-Liberal' Democracy Might Look Like, Fiesole: European University Institute (unpublished manuscript), 1–2.

(2) All democracy promotion efforts need to be based on *careful context-sensitive analyses* in order to *decipher the best-suited approach* in each situation. In practice, this will sometimes require, for example, a top-down or a bottom-up strategy, sometimes pushing hard and sometimes acquiescing to resistance. Moreover, donor governments which strive but regularly fail to follow overall political coherence in their bilateral relationships with "recipient" governments should, at a minimum, examine their foreign policy in light of a do-no-harm standard.

(3) Democracy promoters should try hard to *recuperate the power of the example*. While difficult to measure, there is little doubt that the attraction of prospering and stable democratic regimes has been a key dynamic in the spread of democracy throughout the centuries. Democracies thus need to focus seriously on their internal struggles as one part of the strategy for regaining global democratic momentum. Additionally, in terms of democracy promotion itself, applying military force to help spread democracy or using the rhetoric of democracy promotion to justify counterterrorism measures or military interventions should be out of the question.

(4) Democracy promoters should *adjust their policies to align with recent trends*. For instance, in response to the emergence of "new civic activism,"[5] donors should become more flexible in terms of funding requirements, less focused on the usual suspects (e.g., capital-based advocacy NGOs) and less driven by their own normative and political agendas. Often, low-key, small-scale efforts that lay the foundation for democratic developments rather than trying to push directly for democratic change are most promising. In this sense, in response to an increasingly difficult context in recipient countries, donors should focus on the fundamental basics of democratic rule and shift, if necessary, from the goal of democracy promotion to goals that are less politically transformative and, therefore, usually also less contested, such as conflict management, mediation, and electoral observation.

1.3 CHAPTER BY CHAPTER OVERVIEW

Apart from the second chapter, whose purpose is to summarize the much-debated trends of autocratization and democratic backsliding, all chapters first briefly outline the status quo, work out the most important challenges, and then offer recommendations in their respective fields. Chapters 2, 3 and 4 seek to further illuminate important context conditions for democracy promotion. Gerschewski shows us that there is no general rise in autocratic regimes, but worrying developments indeed with regard to the quality of democratic regimes world-wide in terms of political rights and civil liberties (chapter 2). Poppe and Wolff zoom in on one particularly noticeable phenomenon in this regard – the global spread of shrinking spaces for civil society actors – and discuss how this affects international civil society support (chapter 3). Freyburg looks at a specific strategy of international governance assistance that some consider a promising alternative to the direct and explicit promotion of democracy and discusses whether democracy promotion through so called "functional cooperation" might be a solution to the current malaise (chapter 4).

---

5 Richard Youngs (ed.) 2017: Global Civic Activism in Flux, Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, http://carnegieeurope.eu/2017/03/17/global-civic-activism-in-flux-pub-68301.

We then turn to the two key actors on the world stage with regard to democracy promotion policies: the European Union (Grimm, chapter 5) and the United States (Poppe, chapter 6). Both are increasingly faced with internal and external obstacles and disincentives for democracy promotion, and the EU, so far, has not signaled willingness to fill the gap currently opening in light of US neglect of the matter. Finally, network members examine four world regions where democracy promotion has been an important factor in relationships with "Northwestern" states during the last two decades: the post-Soviet countries (Richter, chapter 7), the Arab world (von Hüllen, chapter 8), Africa (Leininger, chapter 9), as well as Latin America (Wolff, chapter 10).

The assessments and recommendations that are made in the individual chapters are not necessarily always in alignment with each other. This is the case because good solutions are contingent but also because the EDP Network is itself an example of the fact that both democracy and democracy promotion are contested concepts. In general terms, this report uses "democracy" in line with the mainstream concept of liberal, representative democracy, unless explicitly stated otherwise. This is not the case because we necessarily all share such a conception, but because this is the way in which democracy promotion is conceptualized by the very promoters we are studying. Democracy promotion, in the same vein, is used to encapsulate the set of policies that are explicitly aimed at supporting the spread and improvement of democracy, no matter whether they actually do so or not. Having said that, when it comes to weighing up policy trade-offs and formulating policy recommendations, the normative premises of the respective authors necessarily come into play. This diversity in terms of conceptual, methodological and normative approaches and the culture of exchange having emerged on that basis is something we consider one of our research network's strong suits. Moreover, the recommendations offered may be original but also sometimes reflect well-known calls that have not yet been heeded. It is also important to note that, beyond all due skepticism regarding the policy and practice of democracy promotion, we do not wish to see the policy abandoned. We share the hope that, while democracy promotion has not (yet) often proven successful in empirical and normative terms and while we recognize its many problems, potentially this practice can be(come) a worthwhile endeavor improving the lives of many. At the very least, we share the belief that a world in which actors no longer think about how to promote democracy would certainly not be a better place.

2. AUTOCRATIZATION AND DEMOCRATIC BACKSLIDING: TAKING STOCK OF A RECENT DEBATE

Johannes Gerschewski

The debate on the current state of democracy in the world centers on two prominent questions. First, has the global spread of democracy that characterized the decades from the mid-1970s to the mid-1990s given way to a reverse wave of autocratization? Autocratization, in this context, means a regime change from a democratic to an autocratic one. The second question focuses on more fine-grained and small-scale changes. Here, the question is whether we are seeing a global trend towards democratic backsliding, a gradual loss of democratic quality.

This chapter shows that the empirical evidence does not support the alarming notion of a global democratic rollback. When it comes to the issue of gradual democratic backsliding, the picture is mixed but certainly worrying: While there does not seem to be a negative trend in the electoral component of democracy, most democracy indices report a recent decline that particularly concerns civil liberties and the rule of law. This decline is still fairly recent and gradual only, but it clearly suggests a break with the positive global trend of previous decades. And, as I argue in the conclusion, this trend reversal has important implications for the future of democracy promotion.

2.1 AUTOCRATIZATION

Democratization processes are usually described in waves.[6] These waves are loosely defined as a set of transitions from autocratic to democratic regimes that co-occur within a given time span and that outnumber reverse regime changes. Huntington distinguished between the long wave of democratization between 1826 and 1926 that was followed by a reverse autocratization wave, a second democratization wave between 1943 and 1962 that was again followed by a reverse wave, and, lastly, the famous third wave of democratization which started in 1974. The result of this third wave has been a historically unprecedented rise in the absolute number and relative share of democratic regimes in the world that lasted, roughly, until the first years of the 21st century.

In the last one and a half decades, however, observers and scholars have increasingly stated that we are seeing a "resurgence of authoritarian states" and a "democratic rollback." Focusing in particular on China and Russia, a return of "authoritarian great powers" has been detected, which is seen as both representing and further driving a broader trend of authoritarian reversal.[7] In fact, Larry Diamond identifies 25 cases between 2000 and 2014 in which democratic regimes have actually broken down, such as Russia in 2000, Venezuela in 2004, Kenya in 2007, Nicaragua in 2011, the Ukraine in 2012, and Turkey or Thailand in 2014.[8] So, are we seeing a global regression of democracy that is being driven by an autocratic reverse wave?

In answering this question, a study by Geddes, Wright, and Frantz provides a helpful starting point.[9] In addition to the established concept of a democratic transition, they also explicitly define and operationalize autocratic transitions. Their key criterion for differentiating between a democratic and an autocratic regime is the existence of direct, reasonably fair and representative, competitive elections. Drawing on a comprehensive data set that explicitly measures autocratic and democratic transitions, Geddes et al. identify autocratization waves in the 1960s and 1970s in which the number of autocratic transitions was double the number of democratic ones. Yet, in the 1990s and the 2000s

6 Samuel Huntington 1991: The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century, Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.

7 See, among many, Azar Gat 2007: The Return of Authoritarian Great Powers, in: Foreign Affairs 86, June/July, 59–69.

8 Larry Diamond 2015: Facing up to the Democratic Recession, in: Journal of Democracy 26: 1, 141–155.

9 Barbara Geddes/Joseph Wright/Erica Frantz 2014: Autocratic Breakdown and Regime Transitions: A New Data Set, in: Perspectives on Politics, 12: 2, 313–331.

democratic transition significantly outnumbered processes of autocratization. Thus, this study does not find any evidence of a global autocratization wave.

It has to be emphasized that the Geddes et al. data set only covers the years until 2010 and may, therefore, miss some recent trends. However, more recent studies of the global state of democracy and its evolution over time have come to a similar conclusion: We are simply not observing a net reduction in the number of democracies in the world, nor is the global share of democratic regimes or the percentage of the world population living in democracies shrinking.[10] While the autocratization of prominent and also strategically important countries – most notably Turkey under Erdoğan and Russia under Putin – might create a different impression, these and other cases of democratic breakdown are counterbalanced by reverse trends in other countries. The prominent cases, as worrying as they are, provide a misleading picture on a global scale. The democratic rollback is fragmentary and scattered, but there are no signs of a current autocratization wave. In fact, for the time being, democracy is proving to be more robust and resilient than recent gloomy perspectives indicated. While the democracy of today faces many challenges and, without doubt, there is room for improvement, democratic regression is a myth.

2.2 DEMOCRATIC BACKSLIDING

The notion of a crisis of democracy does not necessarily imply an actual wave of democratic breakdowns. According to a more differentiated perspective, what we have witnessed in recent years is rather a global trend of democratic backsliding. This term does not imply a *change of* the system, but rather a gradual *change within* the system. It does not refer to the autocratization of a country, but rather to a loss of democratic quality. While remaining democratic in a general sense, political regimes may suffer from institutional and behavioral malpractice. Such democratic backsliding may lead to a gradual breakdown of democracy (as arguably in the cases of Russia, Turkey, or Venezuela), or not (as – for the time being – in Brazil, Hungary, India, or Poland). In the following, I discuss to what extent we are currently observing such democratic backsliding.

Currently, public discussion of democratic backsliding is shaped by the prominent examples mentioned above. Recent developments in the United States in which President Trump is violating democratic norms, attacking free media, and treating political opponents as illegitimate (and even criminal) are being discussed in this context (see Poppe in this report). The importance of these cases and constant media reporting of these worrying developments have led to pessimistic conclusions about the state of democracy. Are these conclusions based on firm ground, or are we only extrapolating an apparent trend from prominent cases?

10 See Freedom House 2018: Democracy in Crisis, https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/FH_FITW_Report_2018_Final_SinglePage.pdf; IDEA 2017: The Global State of Democracy. Exploring Democracy's Resilience, Stockholm: International IDEA. https://www.idea.int/gsod/files/IDEA-GSOD-2017-REPORT-EN.pdf; Anna Lührmann et al. 2018: State of the World 2017: Autocratization and Exclusion?, in: Democratization, published online, DOI: 10.1080/13510347.2018.1479693.

The empirical picture is rather mixed. Systematic comparative studies come to a nuanced result when assessing the seeming loss of democratic quality worldwide. When looking at the scope of the phenomenon, most leading international datasets agree that recent years have been characterized by a remarkable trend reversal. In the ranking of the influential think tank "Freedom House", 2017 was "the 12th consecutive year" in which "countries that suffered democratic setbacks outnumbered those that registered gains."[11] According to another set (V-Dem), the trend to democratic backsliding has also accelerated in recent years, but the number of countries backsliding has remained lower than the number of countries with advanced democracies – until 2017, when for the first time since 1979 these numbers were the same. This trend becomes even more strongly negative when the different sizes of the countries affected are taken into account: In 2017 "democracy has declined in countries home to one-third of the world population – or 2.5 billion people."[12]

Yet, it is important to note that the overall decline has remained quite modest and has not affected all components of democracy equally. First, according to the different rankings, recent losses do not imply a return to some distant past but typically mean that the global state of democracy is again as "bad" as it was around the turn of the century. Compared to the high hopes and near euphoria that culminated in the end-of-history thesis, these developments are worrying. Yet, I warn against prematurely overstating this short-term trend. Second, it is declines in specific components of liberal democracy that are driving the recent trend to democratic backsliding. Notably, existing indices do not observe a decline but rather continuity, if not continuing improvements, in the electoral component of democracy. Recent losses in democratic quality are mostly seen in the area of civil liberties and the rule of law.[13] A particularly notable element is the spread of increasing restrictions on the freedom of assembly and association (see Poppe/Wolff in this report).

In sum, we are currently facing a global situation characterized by a more or less short-term and modest decline in democratic quality, particularly in the field of civil liberties. This recent trend has put a halt to – and has started to reverse – decades of democratic advances. The period of continuous advancement that started in the late 1970s is clearly over and has given way to a new period of heightened uncertainty over the state and future of democracy. Yet, it is still too early to say whether the world has entered a period of global democratic backsliding, or whether we are rather witnessing merely a few years of democratic stagnation.

2.3 CONCLUSION: WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR DEMOCRACY PROMOTION?

What are the consequences and implications of this empirical picture for the future of democracy promotion? Today, democracy promotion is facing an enormous challenge. It is becoming increasingly difficult to identify and spot the concrete needs for democracy promotion as the dividing lines

11 Freedom House 2018 (footnote 10), 1. See also the findings of the most recent Bertelsmann Transformation Index (BTI 2018) at http://www.bti-project.org.

12 Lührmann et al. 2018 (footnote 10), 1.

13 See IDEA 2017 (footnote 10); Lührmann et al. 2018 (footnote 10).

between democratic and autocratic regimes become blurred. In particular, illiberal democracies are growing in number. While still maintaining the electoral core of democracies and therefore fulfilling minimal definitions of democratic rule, they are gradually undermining political participation rights and civil liberties. These regimes rely on formally democratic rules and structures, but are increasingly expressing them in authoritarian practices. This process represents not only a gradual decay of democratic quality, but it also involves a very subtle hollowing out. Democracy promotion needs to react to this subtlety that often goes unnoticed at the beginning. This need makes in-depth local knowledge indispensable. Analytical precision is needed today to stop the ongoing loss of democratic quality in some countries. As I have shown, from a global and long-term perspective these democratic backsliding processes are not as dramatic as some comments suggest, and an outright wave of autocratization cannot be detected. Yet, democracy promotion clearly faces new challenges. That key democracy promoters and former democratic role models like the United States are beginning to lose their global credibility and integrity and that the European Union is rightly criticized for double standards is making the current situation even more difficult (see Grimm and Poppe in this report).

3. DEMOCRACY PROMOTION AND THE CHALLENGE OF SHRINKING CIVIC SPACES

Annika E. Poppe and Jonas Wolff

3.1 STATUS QUO

Over the past 15 years, civil society organizations (CSOs) in many countries all around the world have seen their room for maneuver severely reduced. State restrictions that constrain the space of civil society range from curtailing the freedoms of assembly and association to restricting access to financial resources to openly harassing individual CSOs and activists.[14] This phenomenon of "shrinking" or "closing spaces" is of immediate relevance for democracy promotion efforts. First, the curtailment of basic freedoms directly runs counter to any efforts at political liberalization. Second, restrictions often specifically target the external support of CSOs. In particular, with the spread of so-called NGO laws, many advocacy organizations engaged in politically "sensitive" areas such as human rights and democracy have seen their access to foreign funding significantly limited or entirely closed.[15]

While attempts to constrain civil society activity are certainly not a novelty, the recent trend of increasing restrictions is remarkable, as it concerns countries that have previously been relatively open to external democracy promotion. According to different estimates, since the turn of the century,

14 Thomas Carothers/Saskia Brechenmacher 2014: "Closing Space. Democracy and Human Rights Support under Fire", http://ceip.org/1hBVQKk, 38–39; Douglas Rutzen 2015: Civil Society under Assault, in: Journal of Democracy, 26: 4, 28–39.

15 Kendra Dupuy/James Ron/Aseem Prakash 2016: "Hands Off My Regime! Governments' Restrictions on Foreign Aid to Non-Governmental Organizations in Poor and Middle-Income Countries", in: World Development 84, 299–311.

between 40 and 60 countries have started to actively push back international support for democracy and human rights.[16] This trend covers countries from all world regions and all regime types. The most prominent cases include countries that experienced processes of authoritarianization such as Egypt, Ethiopia, Russia, and Venezuela. But increasing restrictions on international civil society support can also be observed in democratic regimes such as Ecuador, Hungary, India or Israel.

3.2 CHALLENGES

The phenomenon of shrinking spaces poses three challenges to those engaged in democracy promotion: as an *operational* challenge, the question is how democracy can be promoted in contexts of shrinking space. The diversity of democracy promoting entities, of actors on the "recipient" side as well as of the types of restrictions, make for a large number of different, context-specific operational challenges. External democracy promotion actors often face immediate constraints on their own work: the delay or denial of visa and residence permits, the flow of already allocated money or their activities becoming illegal through new laws, smear campaigns against their work, and sometimes even direct threats to the organization or individuals. Occasionally they also face fading support by their own governments, which are often concerned about not further alienating a partner government on the defensive. But even if external actors still act relatively unrestrainedly, their work is often hindered by restrictions their local partners are confronted with.

As a *political* challenge, the question is how democracy promoters can respond politically to shrinking spaces. The regular options for political responses by governments apply, ranging from public or quiet diplomacy, to political dialogue, to positive and negative incentives, such as conditional aid or sanctions. Many of those governments which have declared democracy promotion to be a key element of their foreign policy have, not surprisingly, so far responded hesitantly. Just as these governments never went out of their way to promote democracy in other countries – particularly not when this endangered other, more tangible interests – the recent wave of restrictions has not elicited a coherent or united response. On the contrary, the majority of governments took a long time to recognize, situate and begin to understand the phenomenon. Most responses so far have been limited to political dialogue and relatively mild diplomatic pressure. Developing coherent responses has been further complicated by the fact that more and more democratic states have themselves provided convenient templates for authoritarian states to emulate in this regard. For instance, the US-driven "War on Terror" has served as a key justification for increasing state oversight of civil society organizations all around the world.

As a *normative* challenge, the question is how democracy promotion can be preserved or restored as a legitimate type of external interference. Indeed, this might be the (often denied) key insight that the phenomenon of shrinking space has brought into sharper relief: promoting democracy in a country not one's own is a political act that, even if invited, constitutes external interference. Consequently,

16 Annika Elena Poppe/Jonas Wolff 2017: The Contested Spaces of Civil Society in a Plural World. Norm Contestation in the Debate about Restrictions on International Civil Society Support, in: Contemporary Politics, 23: 4, 469–488, here: 472.

the legitimacy of democracy promotion can be – and regularly is – contested. Over the past 15 years, governments all over the world have more openly and forcefully questioned the legitimacy of outside political activity in their country. And while their motives may indeed often lie in stabilizing their rule or in political power plays, their arguments are based on well-established international norms that are certainly contested, but are difficult to reject outright: national sovereignty, non-interference and self-determination.[17]

3.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

Whereas the operational challenges are being tackled more or less successfully in the daily activities of external democracy promoters, the political and normative challenges have turned out to be more difficult to deal with.

In terms of *operational responses*, many democracy promotion actors have already become creative in their daily work. While local CSOs and their external supporters at times entirely cease their activities, in many cases they manage to adapt pragmatically: they shift their work to conform to new restrictions or simply rebrand what they are doing, they change legal organizational form and/or upgrade their security standards. Thus, operational actors, in many cases, already use the room to maneuver to the extent that this is still possible.

For them to go further and rely on political backup a more coherent *political response* by "donor" governments is needed. As noted, this is mostly missing, since these governments are regularly conflicted and are restrained by other interests they are pursuing; take the Middle East for example (see van Hüllen in this report), where the European response is subdued by the overarching goal of stopping the flow of refugees, and where the United States has long been hesitant due to anti-terrorism and other strategic concerns. At a minimum here, governments should realign their foreign policies with regard to a do-no-harm approach. This means that, if actively engaging in countering shrinking spaces is not a realistic option, governments should at least make sure that they do not – passively or inadvertently – contribute to a further deterioration of the situation.

For governments seeking to actively engage, there are no easy ways to respond politically to shrinking spaces. All available strategic options come with risks and trade-offs. When devising country-specific response strategies, it might be useful to consider the range of options along two axes:

1. When it comes to dealing with the restrictive context in a given country, democracy promoters can either *adapt* to the existing restrictions or try to change the circumstances and thus *resist*. The first option usually allows for some influence and can help threatened local CSOs to survive. But accepting the status quo risks bolstering the regime, while limited spaces are perpetuated. *Resistance* stays true to the original cause and may even help create and open spaces,

17 See Poppe/Wolff 2017 (footnote 16).

but runs the risk of a counter reaction by the regime that increases threats on local CSOs and/or renders any international engagement impossible.

2. When it comes to dealing with the "recipient" actors involved, external actors can choose to focus on *mediation* between the state and CSOs or aim at *empowering* civil society actors. The former can help alleviate tensions but risks further weakening the relative autonomy of the civil society sector. The latter offers direct help to weakened CSOs, but can also provoke intensified restrictions.[18]

Democracy support actors need to carefully mix and match these strategies (which are ideal types only) – always on the basis of a careful context-sensitive analysis of a given situation and with a view to the potentially ambivalent effects of any measures adopted.

Finally, *the normative challenge* to the endeavor of democracy promotion has yet to be fully recognized and tackled. Democracy promoting governments have displayed a clear tendency to ignore this issue. It might be fair enough in many cases to disqualify justifications by governments that restrict civil society space as thinly veiled attempts to weaken the opposition and consolidate power. Yet, entirely disregarding the justifications advanced misses the point that the controversy over civil society support challenges fundamental norms that guide and legitimate international democracy promotion. This normative challenge highlights the fact that these norms are not at all clearly spelled out: the legality as well as the legitimacy of external interference in the name of democracy does not rest on a sound or coherent footing. This calls for a serious global debate on international norm development that has barely begun – as difficult as such a debate will certainly be.

4. DEMOCRACY PROMOTION BY INDIRECT MEANS: POTENTIAL AND LIMITS OF FUNCTIONAL COOPERATION

Tina Freyburg

4.1 STATUS QUO

Widespread consensus has it that democracy promotion through military coercion is not a particularly promising strategy. Yet, the notion of promoting democracy in stable authoritarian regimes by cooperative means raises a seemingly intractable problem: why should the incumbent ruler be willing to commit what amounts to political suicide by enacting genuine democratic change? Non-coercive instruments of democracy promotion, such as political conditionality and assistance to democratic activists, require

18 Please note that empowering CSOs is not the same as resisting shrinking space, as CSOs may be directly supported with a view to enabling their adaptation to an increasingly restrictive context, just as mediation can be used as a strategy to resist the implementation of restrictive measures.

at least tacit consent on the part of the targeted regime. As outlined in previous chapters, recent years have seen a significant decrease in the number of countries in which democracy promoters can count on such (tacit) consent. In the current context, therefore, the search for alternatives to direct democracy promotion has become more important than ever. In this chapter, I argue that functional cooperation with authoritarian regimes offers such an alternative. As I show, research suggests that, by supporting the implementation of legal and administrative governance standards in policy sectors outside the key areas of democracy promotion, donors can de facto contribute to a gradual transfer of democratic norms. Yet, as will be seen, the success of such an indirect approach to promoting democratic change depends on preconditions that are being similarly undermined in the current global context.

Functional cooperation, in this context, refers to foreign aid programs and activities that focus on specific policy sectors (e.g., water, health, education, energy) with the aim of improving the operation and performance of the public administration in the given sector by promoting legal and administrative governance standards. The apparently non-political nature of such sector-specific governance programs and their promise to promote the provision of public goods as well as services, thereby addressing sources of potential domestic discontent, makes functional cooperation attractive to authoritarian regimes. This calculation on the part of recipient governments notwithstanding, sector-specific governance programs can actually serve to gradually promote democratic standards from within the public sector. Functional cooperation brings together government regulators to exchange information, develop common regulatory standards, and assist one another in enforcing these standards. Having been designed by and for advanced democracies, the template regulations embody governance provisions that reflect key democratic principles, notably participatory, transparent, and accountable modes of administrative decision-making.[19] By participating in externally supported policy reform programs, state officials from non-democracies can become acquainted with democratic governance.[20] Insofar as partner countries approximate their domestic legislation to the template regulation provided, democratic provisions can also enter domestic legislation if not shape administrative practices in non-democracies. Evidence in support of such a democratizing potential of functional cooperation has been found in studies of various EU Neighbourhood policy initiatives.[21] Similar programs of sectoral reform are, however, also applied by external actors other than the EU, including the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ), the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, and the UN Development Programme, and can also happen within transgovernmental networks such as the International Competition Network.

By itself, functional cooperation is certainly unlikely to engender more profound democratic change, and it can even have the opposite effect when the stabilization of a given authoritarian regime through improved public sector performance outweighs the above-mentioned pro-democratic

19 Derick Brinkerhoff 2000: Democratic Governance and Sectoral Policy Reform: Tracing Linkages and Exploring Synergies, in: World Development, 28: 4, 601–615.

20 Tina Freyburg 2015: Transgovernmental Networks as an Apprenticeship in Democracy? Socialization into Democratic Governance Through Cross-national Activities, in: International Studies Quarterly, 59: 1, 59–71.

21 Tina Freyburg et al. 2015: EU Democracy Promotion by Functional Cooperation: The European Union and Its Neighbourhood, Palgrave.

effects (see van Hüllen in this report). Yet, at least potentially, this low-key, depoliticized, and technocratic way of transferring democratic principles and practices can play an important role in preparing the (legal) administrative ground upon which eventual political transitions can rest.[22] Functional cooperation might thus contribute – albeit indirectly, and only partially – to the goal of democratization.

4.2 CHALLENGES

Sector-specific governance programs generally operate without much publicity and are relatively unaffected by the turbulences of political dispute. In most cases, they are actively sought by regimes that see them as unthreatening and offering additional resources to boost their capacity to implement public policies. The cooperative character of such indirect democracy promotion activities makes them a promising venue even in (semi-)authoritarian contexts. At the same time, because they depend on being perceived as non-political, these sector governance programs can realize their democratizing potential only in relatively non-politicized settings. While generally better suited for supporting democracy in unfavorable contexts, in light of amplified politicization and geopolitical hardening of relations, this indirect strategy of democracy promotion is increasingly being confronted with the same challenges straightforward policies of democracy promotion are facing.[23]

First, a (semi-)authoritarian regime needs to perceive participation in sector-specific reform programs to be beneficial. It needs to be convinced that it can find better solutions to its specific policy problems by cooperating with established democracies than by developing independent solutions or by looking for assistance elsewhere. The larger its own resources and the wider the spectrum of alternative solutions and partners, the smaller the chance that it will adopt rules and standards originating in developed democracies given their potentially costly political implications (i.e., precisely the provisions of democratic governance incorporated in them). While liberal democracies still have the greatest technological and economic resources to invest in development elsewhere, regional authoritarian powers such as Saudi Arabia and China have started to conceive their foreign relations in broader terms. Part of their strategy consists in participating more substantially in development aid. What distinguishes their approach from "traditional" development cooperation as practiced by liberal democracies is that the latter tend to make assistance conditional on politico-economic criteria, while the former set no conditions of this kind, which makes them interesting partners for authoritarian regimes.[24]

Second, targeted countries may feel more pressure to harmonize their rules and practices with an externally-supported standard if this standard enjoys broad international legitimacy, i.e. if it is

---

22 Tatiana Zaharchenko/Gretta Goldenman 2004: Accountability in Governance: The Challenge of Implementing the Aargus Convention in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, in: International Environmental Agreements: Politics, Law and Economics, 4, 229–251.

23 Tina Freyburg/Sandra Lavenex 2018: Democracy Promotion by Functional Cooperation, in: Tobias Schumacher/Andreas Marchetti/Thomas Demmelhuber (eds.): Routledge Handbook on the European Neighbourhood Policy, Routledge.

24 Tina Freyburg/Solveig Richter 2015: Local Actors in the Driver's Seat: Transatlantic Democracy Promotion under Regime Competition in the Arab World, in: Democratization 22: 3, 496–518.

recognized and applied by the international community. There are trends that make the stability of international norms in the near future less certain. Our rules-based world is crumbling under pressures of globalization that seem to be giving birth to a return of geopolitics. This, in turn, may hamper longer-term relationships between democracies and non-democracies; practices of cross-national sectoral cooperation may suffer a setback. The loss in credibility, leverage and political will on the part of established democracies outlined in the introduction to this report adds to this.

Third, whether or not a regime is willing to adopt and apply rules originating in liberal democracies depends on its own degree of liberalization. Regimes that risk excessively high political costs related to the adoption of rules fostering issue-specific transparency, accountability, and participation are likely to engage only hesitantly in functional cooperation with democracies. For instance, governments that have difficulty in maintaining control over their country and/or that struggle with (perceived) terrorist threats will probably remove the democratic components of a governance reform or renounce the reform program altogether. This scenario has become more common, for instance, in the countries surrounding the EU, such as Egypt.

Finally, even when functional cooperation is successful in transferring certain norms, there is no automatic spill-over from rule adoption to rule application. Provisions of democratic governance incorporated in sectoral rules may be adopted by a recipient country as part of its strategy for addressing a specific policy challenge, but not implemented – due to the anticipated high political costs of application or because of the instability (or lack) of effective government. To be sure, an increase in democratic governance is no real substitute for democratic transformation proper. Rules pertaining to transparency provisions in environmental legislation or to independent judicial review in asylum policy, for instance, are only small drops in the ocean of institutional provisions constituting a democratic order. Still, if included in domestic legislation, provisions of democratic governance can constitute a domestically legitimized point of reference for reform-minded agents that may demand their realization in practice.

4.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

Indirect democracy promotion by means of functional cooperation with (semi-)authoritarian regimes can be effective, but only in a context of cooperative relations between the actors involved. Even then, it can only promote acquaintance with democratic attitudes and practices through long-term relationships marked by sufficient trust to allow the necessary leeway and openness. This requires a mutual commitment to rule-based bilateral relations and the renunciation on the part of the would-be democracy promoter of ad-hoc, arbitrary actions that undermine the very principles on which functional cooperation is based. Confrontation and “hard” policies that aim at coercing (semi-) authoritarian regimes are, thus, incompatible with indirect democracy promotion through functional cooperation; policy-specific reform programs bringing together state administrations from democracies and non-democracies in order to work on common policy challenges are to be protected and extended. Finally, to ensure that autocratic states continue to associate benefits with cooperation with more developed democracies, liberal democracies need to refrain from protectionist policies and reduced

international commitments. Maintaining development cooperation with an attitude of openness toward (semi-)authoritarian and quasi-democratic countries is fundamental for the support of indirect efforts at promoting gradual processes of democratization.

5. DEMOCRACY PROMOTION AND THE EUROPEAN UNION

Sonja Grimm

5.1 STATUS QUO

Since its foundation, the EU has been a community of values of liberal democracies. This 'democracy consensus' informs EU democracy promotion (DP), especially EU enlargement policy, as its most comprehensive foreign policy framework. In 1993, the Copenhagen Council opened a membership perspective for all associated Central and Eastern European countries – on the condition that they became functioning democracies and market economies capable of applying the EU body of law. The EU rewarded compliance with financial and technical assistance, the opening of accession negotiations and, ultimately, membership.

Accession conditionality has also inspired the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) towards the Eastern and Southern neighbors and the EU development cooperation policy towards developing countries worldwide, where partner countries do not have a membership perspective. Here, progress in democratization is rewarded with the provision of technical or financial assistance, economic or security partnerships or visa liberalization.

Three main features characterize overall EU DP. First, it is top-down-oriented. The EU directly negotiates the conditions of cooperation with partner country governments and their line ministries. Assistance is given to state actors. Through the European Instrument of Democracy and Human Rights and the European Endowment for Democracy, a complementary bottom-up strategy supporting civil society has been implemented, but plays only a minor role in the Union's total aid spending. Second, the EU prefers an indirect approach to DP over a direct approach. Most of the EU's financial assistance is dedicated to socio-economic development and the technical side of state building supporting democratization indirectly via modernization, whereas direct DP for the building of democratic institutions and the rule of law receives only a minor share. Third, EU DP sequences security first, democracy second. Especially in post-conflict or fragile contexts, the EU gives money to the building of security and stabilization before investing in democratic institution building.[25]

25 Sonja Grimm/Okka Lou Mathis 2015: Stability First, Development Second, Democracy Third: The European Union's Policy towards Post-Conflict Western Balkans 1991–2010, in: Europe-Asia Studies, 67: 6, 916–947.

5.2 CHALLENGES

Currently, the Union's DP is confronted with four major challenges: first, EU DP loses credibility as a consequence of illiberal internal tendencies in member countries. In several member states, right wing populist parties have won a substantial share of seats in national legislatures (e.g. Belgium, Finland, Latvia, Sweden, Netherlands, Denmark, UK, and most recently, Germany), or have even successfully campaigned for office in the political executive (e.g. France, Hungary, Poland, Austria, Italy). Their success can partly be explained by increasing skepticism inside the member states' electorates in connection with European integration, its bureaucratic shape, its seeming lack of democratic accountability and its strong focus on economic austerity (e.g. its handling of the Eurozone crisis in Greece, Italy and Spain). Additionally, the so called "refugee crisis" of 2015 revealed double standards. While openly criticizing authoritarianization in countries such as Egypt, Ethiopia, Russia, and Venezuela, the demolition of democracy in Turkey after the 16 July 2016 coup d'état was only moderately criticized, in order not to endanger the EU-Turkey refugee deal of 18 March 2016.[26] These developments question whether the EU democracy consensus still exists, and whether the Union is able and willing to defend and promote democracy when security or economy interests are at stake.

Second, the three main EU DP strategies (top-down, indirect, security before democracy) lack effectiveness and need a substantial overhaul. The EU's top-down strategy frequently implies cooperation with corrupt governments which have limited capacity, willingness or room to maneuver in order to implement democracy and rule of law reforms. While international aid donors favor "going local" in aid giving, the EU is not well prepared to deal directly with pro-democracy actors which might drive political reform processes. Although it seeks to achieve the opposite, because of the challenge of harmonizing the interests of three EU institutions (Commission, Council, Parliament) and 28 member states, the EU is losing its grip on the outcomes of reform in non-democratic partner countries.[27]

The indirect approach to DP does not efficiently advance democratization either. The indirect approach is favored because it is perceived as being less politicized than the direct approach and circumvents direct interference in the domestic political affairs of a partner country. However, the long-term effects of socio-economic development on democracy are too moderate and fainthearted to substantially advance democratic institution building and to support pro-democracy actors in non-democracies. Even in the potential candidate countries in the Western Balkans, to give an example, indirect EU DP does not yield the intended result of rising democratic quality.[28] On the other hand, a direct approach to DP requires that the EU interferes more openly and directly in domestic state affairs, for example through the support of political-party building or the establishment of free media. Such a strategy would hardly be justifiable either inside or outside the EU.

---

26 European Commission, Press Release, 19 March 2016, www.europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-16-963_de.htm.

27 Sonja Grimm 2015: European Democracy Promotion in Crisis: Conflicts of Objectives, Neglected External– Domestic Interactions and the Authoritarian Backlash, in: Global Policy, 6: 1, 73–82.

28 Sonja Grimm/Okka Lou Mathis 2018: Democratization via Aid? The European Union's Democracy Promotion in the Western Balkans 1994–2010, in: European Union Politics, 19: 1, 163–184.

Prioritizing security and stabilization over institution building negatively affects the highly sought-after outcome of socio-economic development. Security and stability are promoted at the expense of institution-building; but without effective institutions and capable governments, sustainable socio-economic development cannot be achieved. Hence, a lack of good governance also negatively affects socio-economic development, as can be observed, for example, in the EU's African partner countries (see van Hüllen and Leininger in this report) and also in the post-soviet space (see Richter in this report).

Third, the EU is not ready (or is unwilling?) to respond meaningfully to political developments in partner countries, neither to democratic setbacks nor to pro-democratic windows of opportunity. If partner countries do not comply with the Union's membership or political conditions, but severely violate human rights, the EU, rarely if ever, punishes such behavior through the reduction or total withdrawal of aid.[29] A case in point is Tunisia under then President Ben Ali. The country became a major beneficiary of EU funds despite its grim human rights record because it liberalized its market along EU lines and co-operated with the security services of some EU member states in the fight against terrorism.[30] But also when chances for democratization are good, the EU rarely changes its neighborhood approach. The 2011/2012 Arab spring and the reluctant European responses to the popular uprisings are a case in point (see van Hüllen in this report).

Fourth, EU DP is at odds with regional powers' countervailing EU DP policies, for example Russia in the former Soviet space, China in Asia or Sub-Saharan Africa or Saudi Arabia in Northern Africa. These new players in economic and development cooperation make offers without tying them to political conditions. At present, findings on how these activities are affecting the impact of EU and US DP are inconclusive.[31]

Considering that under US-President Trump, the credibility of the US as a model democracy (promoter) has sunk to a low point (see Poppe in this report), it is questionable whether the US administration still is (and will continue to be) a reliable partner in global DP and whether the EU and the US can jointly exert sufficient leverage on authoritarian incumbents.

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

To deal with these challenges, the EU needs to intensify its efforts to coordinate democracy promotion with and among its members as well as with other regional and international organizations. Coordination of conditions and sanctions efficiently increases compliance of partner countries with EU

29 Bernhard Reinsberg 2015: Foreign Aid Responses to Political Liberalization, in: World Development, 75: 1, 46–61.

30 Raffaella A. Sarto 2016: Normative Empire Europe: The European Union, its Borderlands, and the 'Arab Spring', in: Journal of Common Market Studies, 54: 2, 215–232.

31 Sonja Grimm 2015: European Democracy Promotion in Crisis: Conflicts of Objectives, Neglected External– Domestic Interactions and the Authoritarian Backlash, in: Global Policy, 6: 1, 73–82.

conditions. The EU should make more open use of its normative power and proactively take the lead in the development and practice of global DP.

The EU should complement its favored top-down approach to DP more consequently with a better-funded bottom-up approach. A substantial strengthening of the bottom-up instruments of EIDHR and EED would support civil society activism and prevent further shrinking of the public space. For alternative recipients inside the civil society, EU DP should become less technocratic, and the EU should strive to increase its DP assistance outreach beyond the usual recipients of DP. The EU should also develop quicker reaction mechanisms to human rights violations and democratic setbacks in order to make its DP instruments more efficient and to increase its credibility as a global norm entrepreneur in the name of human rights, democracy, and the rule of law. Finally, the EU should practice what it preaches: focus on fundamental basics of democratic rule and accountability, and take this seriously, both in DP towards partner countries and in its integration policies towards the member states. To increase the likelihood of stabilization and socio-economic development, the EU should more directly invest in and foster democratic institution-building, inside and outside its borders.

6. DEMOCRACY PROMOTION UNDER THE CURRENT US ADMINISTRATION

Annika E. Poppe

6.1 STATUS QUO

Democracy promotion has been at the core of US foreign policy strategy since the end of the Cold War, when it became a cornerstone of the National Security Strategy. Democracy promotion, according to the widely shared and regularly articulated conviction in the foreign policy elite, would bring numerous economic, security, and normative benefits for everyone involved and is also the morally right thing to do. While the (until recently) unquestioned rhetorical commitment to democracy promotion delimits what is considered normatively appropriate foreign policy behavior for the declared 'champion of democracy' and while this policy has an important function for generating consensus and affirming national identity, democracy promotion *practice* has always lagged far behind the rhetoric.[32] After over one year in office, it has become clear that presidential candidate Trump's lack of interest in and disdain for democracy promotion has indeed persisted in office. His secretaries of state so far have also not been inclined to assume leadership on behalf of democracy. Considering that President Trump has vowed to cut democracy promotion efforts on all fronts, the signs point towards significant changes to democracy promotion strategically and operationally. In terms of budgetary changes, for example, Trump has attempted significant cutbacks – which have, however, so

32 Annika E. Poppe 2010: Whither to, Obama? U.S. Democracy Promotion after the Cold War, PRIF Report No. 96, Frankfurt/M, https://www.hsfk.de/fileadmin/HSFK/hsfk_downloads/prif96.pdf

far been successfully averted by Congress.[33] And while he has already severely damaged US credibility as 'democracy promoter in chief,' it is not yet clear how much the overall policy, which is borne by numerous agencies and actors inside and outside the government ('US democracy promotion industry'), will be affected.

6.2 CHALLENGES

It is certainly not the Trump administration that is responsible for the trouble that US democracy promotion is in. US democracy promotion has been challenged on different fronts for two decades now. Beyond the challenges identified in the introduction to this report, two things need to be considered for the United States specifically: (1) US credibility as *the* democracy promoter on the world stage has suffered severely over the past two decades. Selective and often halfhearted engagement for democracy abroad as well as President Bush's labeling of US interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq as democracy promotion have tarnished the policy in the eyes of many observers. Perhaps just as important, internal developments – the curtailment of basic rights, the use of torture, the sometimes chaotic US political process that puts democratic institutions in doubt – have contributed to a dimming of the American torch of democracy. Moreover, (2) isolationist tendencies, always simmering in the background in the political process, as well as the notion that democracy promotion is irrelevant for US "hard interests" has found a new outlet in the Trump administration.

President Trump is deepening these troubles but, overall, his administration should be viewed less as a cause but more as a symptom of the problems democracy (promotion) is facing. From the perspective of those favoring active engagement on behalf of democracy worldwide, the list of grievances is long: from the beginning of his candidacy, Trump has questioned the premises of democracy promotion that have reliably shaped US post-Cold War thinking on this policy. Most prominently, Trump criticized US foreign policy as being based on "the dangerous idea that we could make Western democracies out of countries that had no experience or interest in becoming a Western democracy," thus giving rise to a policy that was arrogant, illogical, and has contributed to strengthening ISIS.[34] Highly unconventional for an American president (to be), Trump openly questioned democracy's universal appeal.[35] He also repeatedly pointed out that the United States was a bad messenger as its own democracy had derailed.[36] It was no surprise then when the president, once in office, made no senior-level appointments of people with a clear pro-democracy record, or when he and his Secretary of State tried to slash the budget for democracy and governance – so far with little success.[37]

---

33 Andrew Miller/Todd Ruffner 2018: President Trump's Second Foreign Affairs Budget, POMED Report June 2018, https://pomed.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/BudgetReportFY19_Digital.pdf.

34 "Trump on Foreign Policy", 27 April 2016, http://nationalinterest.org/feature/trump-foreign-policy-15960?page=show.

35 "Trump fires up crowd with attack on Clinton's 'disqualifying conduct", 6 September 2016, https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2016/sep/06/donald-trump-rally-greenville-north-carolina-clinton-attack.

36 "Transcript: Donald Trump on NATO, Turkey's Coup Attempt and the World", 21 July 2016, http://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/22/us/politics/donald-trump-foreign-policy-interview.html.

37 See Miller/Ruffner 2018 (footnote 33).

Trump clearly represents a low point for US credibility on the matter of democracy. His openly expressed doubts about democratic institutions, his hesitance in unequivocally distancing himself from violence, his attacks on independent media, and his willing and open (rhetorical) embrace of authoritarian leaders have yielded comparisons with an authoritarian style.[38] Trump's openly expressed racism and sexism and his defaming of entire populations and the religion of Islam have further clouded the image of a potentially shining example of democratic leadership. Moreover, with very few exceptions, he and his team have avoided talking about democracy (promotion) and human rights whenever possible, most prominently in the recent National Security Strategy. These seemingly minor issues are far from irrelevant. Autocratic leaders as well as pro-democracy activists all over the world are reading the signs and are adjusting their behavior accordingly. Increasingly repressive governments as diverse as Cambodia, Egypt, Honduras, and Hungary have felt emboldened by the new administration's reservations in connection with democracy and have stepped up anti-democratic rhetoric and, in part, also anti-democratic measures.[39]

When making any predictions about US democracy promotion policy in the future, it is important to keep in mind that the president and cabinet is just one player among several in the US foreign policy elite. It is safe to say that US democracy promotion is unlikely to disappear from the world stage entirely, because of a deeply entrenched democracy promotion bureaucracy and many very committed individuals, among them top diplomats as well as a Congress which has in the past often pushed the administration in the direction of strengthening this policy.[40] While presidential neglect and rhetorical sabotage are indeed damaging US democracy promotion efforts and should be taken seriously, it would take a much more concerted effort to purge the issue from US foreign policy. The White House, however, currently cares too little about democracy promotion and is too chaotic to form a clear strategy in either direction. In the light of this as well as the well-entrenched bureaucracy, for the time being "democracy promotion schemes continue on autopilot in many countries, shielded by multi-year budgets."[41]

It is possible that the administration intends to reframe democracy promotion as a strategic tool against US "enemies," thus using it to target hostile autocratic regimes in order to effect regime change.[42] This would build on the current tendency to more or less openly use democracy promotion – if addressed at all – for the pursuance of hard interests, especially security and counterterrorism. The administration might yet revive this 'radical' and highly controversial dimension of President

38 Steven Levitsky/Daniel Ziblatt 2016: "Is Donald Trump a Threat to Democracy?" 16 December 2016, https://www.nytimes.com/2016/12/16/opinion/sunday/is-donald-trump-a-threat-to-democracy.html.

39 "Donald Trump's Administration is Promoting Democracy and Human Rights", 6 December 2017, https://www.economist.com/news/united-states/21732074-fortunately-he-has-yet-notice-donald-trumps-administration-promoting-democracy-and; Thomas Carothers 2017: "Democracy Promotion under Trump: What Has Been Lost? What Remains?", 6 September 2017, http://carnegieendowment.org/2017/09/06/democracy-promotion-under-trump-what-has-been-lost-what-remains-pub-73021.

40 See Carothers 2017 (footnote 39).

41 See the Economist (footnote 39).

42 Nicolas Bouchet 2017: "The Trump Administration and Democracy Promotion: Thinking about Regime Change?", 3 November 2017, http://www.external-democracy-promotion.eu/trump-administration-democracy-promotion-thinking-regime-change/; Carothers 2017 (footnote 39).

Bush's Freedom Agenda.[43] It is also noteworthy that, in specific instances, democracy and human rights are still being used as policy lever; for example and to the surprise of many observers, the Trump administration recently withheld a significant amount of promised foreign aid to Egypt, citing the country's poor human rights record as one reason.[44]

6.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

Overall, this means that the champion of democracy has become a wobbly candidate. With top level rhetorical support basically nonexistent, it is unclear how well lower-level democracy promotion efforts can continue – but continue, in one form or another, they will. What does this probably mean for US democracy promotion policy as well as for international democracy promotion actors? Should the administration maintain its lack of interest in and even disdain for democracy promotion in general, this would bode ill for US democracy promotion as we know it. That, however, may not be an exclusively negative development. Inasmuch as this policy can be regarded as mostly a farce anyway, it might be argued that the Trump administration is now at least closing the gap between "words" and "deeds" in this already much criticized policy area, and that US democracy promotion has done much harm anyway – in light of its narrow conception and often a-political/uncritical foundations. Revisiting these foundations and becoming more open to democracy's diverse faces would certainly do the whole policy endeavor some good – but is not to be expected from the new administration and instead will have to come from more operational actors. Restoring US credibility and "living by example" as much as that is possible is certainly good advice. More importantly, the United States should refrain from too closely linking the policy to counterterrorism in general and avoid labeling any military action as democracy promotion in particular.

Other pro-democracy actors should become accustomed to the lack of vocal US government support – and, ideally, use this to their own advantage. There is a chance to fill the existing vacuum, ideally by offering less top-down, more genuinely demand-driven support. Currently, other state actors do not seem to be eager to fill this void. The future in this regard might indeed belong to smaller, non-governmental entities, perhaps even new organizational forms. A focus on low-key, small-scale efforts carried out in a cooperative manner seems to be the way forward. Should the United States indeed attempt to turn democracy promotion into a strategy against what it considers problematic authoritarian regimes, international actors should try to oppose that in order to avoid further harm to democracy promotion in general. In either case, pro-democratic actors need to realign, but the US should not take the vocal or visible lead.

---

43 Oz Hassan 2013: Constructing America's Freedom Agenda for the Middle East. Democracy and Domination. Annika Elena Poppe 2017: Recalibrating the Interest-Values-Nexus. US Democracy Promotion in the Middle East, in: Orient, 58: 2, 15–22.

44 See Carothers 2017 (footnote 39).

7. DEMOCRACY PROMOTION IN THE POST-SOVIET SPACE

Solveig Richter

7.1 STATUS QUO

Three developments are relevant when we look at the way democracy is currently (not) being promoted in the post-soviet space, specifically in the six countries Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine[45]: Firstly, the contestation between the transatlantic community and Russia has escalated over the past five years, with Russia using a mixture of hard and soft power (often also called hybrid warfare) to increase its sphere of influence in the region. Some of the Eastern European NATO and EU member states are pushing their organizations to have their security concerns addressed as well. This has almost resulted in open military confrontation, followed by EU sanctions against Russia and a loss of intermediary space of dialogue and soft power politics. We can also observe an increased level of polarization between and radicalization within the camps, as the heated debate about the deployment of NATO troops in the Baltic states demonstrates.

In line with this, secondly, the two major democracy promoters – the EU and the US – are less and less willing and able to pressure the countries into democratic reforms. The EU faces a severe loss of appeal due to internal crises, populism and backsliding tendencies in existing member states. This is weakening the EU's normative coherence as a democracy promoter in the face of "alternative" forms of state authority which are being actively – directly or in subversive ways – promoted by Russia.[46] A concrete example is the more confrontational stance the right-wing government in Poland, once one of the core drivers behind the EU's Eastern Partnership, has adopted towards neighboring Ukraine.[47] While major steps occurred in the European Neighborhood Policy (e.g. Association Agreements (AA)/Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas (DCFTA) with Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia and visa liberalization with Georgia and with Ukraine in 2017 in addition to Moldova 2014), these were framed and implemented more as a technocratic than a political process.[48] US foreign policy towards Russia is characterized by unpredictability and an emphasis on hard power instruments. US foundations such as the Open Society Foundations which are engaged in human rights and civil society support are under pressure back home and in more established democracies in Central Europe such as Hungary, which diminishes their room for action in the post-soviet space as well. Another, more legally-oriented European democracy promoter, the Council of Europe, was shaken by corruption scandals with regard to Azerbaijan, which weakened its credibility enormously.

---

45 Out of the 14 Non-Russian sovereign successor states of the Former Soviet Union, three countries have already joined the EU while the five Central Asian States form a distinct region and will thus not be covered by this article.

46 See Grimm in this report; on the "normative war" with Russia, see Kadri Liik 2018: Winning the Normative War with Russia: An EU-Russia Power Audit, European Council on Foreign Relations, Policy Brief, May 2018.

47 See Kataryna Wolczuk 2017: Abandoning the Eastern Partnership Would Be a Terrible Act of Self-Harm for Poland, Chatham House, Expert Comment, 21 November 2017.

48 See Balázs Jarábik 2017: Implementing the EU Association Agreements with Ukraine, Georgia, and Moldova, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 16 November 2017.

Thirdly, on a more positive note, the region also offers some signs of hope – notably considerable, albeit fragile progress towards democracy in Georgia and in the non-occupied parts of Ukraine, and an active pro-democratic opposition which is promoting change in the shadow of big power politics, as we have recently seen in Armenia. New democracy promoters have emerged on the scene which are trying to promote an active democratization policy: The European Endowment for Democracy (EED) was created in 2012 as a private foundation that is seeking to operate with more flexibility than established governmental institutions. However, budgetary constraints are seriously inhibiting effective projects in the region.

7.2 CHALLENGES

Since the fall of the Berlin Wall the post-soviet space has been an area of contestation between Russia and the West – both in geopolitical and in normative terms. Accordingly, democracy promotion has always been framed as an element of soft power politics by proponents such as the EU or the US and opponents such as Russia. Recently, however, the escalation of the geopolitical confrontation has brought hard power politics, e.g. military engagements, back to the headlines, further diminishing push and pull factors for democratization – whether these involve the interest of European capitals in democratic albeit risky transitions or their willingness to engage in lengthy deliberations in parliament in the face of security threats on the part of some post-soviet countries.

In line with global trends, democratic backsliding and shrinking spaces are characteristic features for political regimes in the area as well (see Gerschewski and Poppe/Wolff in this report). Freedom House categorizes three countries as having a 'transitional government or hybrid regime' (Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine), one country as a 'semi-consolidated authoritarian regime' (Armenia) and two countries as 'consolidated authoritarian regimes' (Azerbaijan and Belarus). The 2018 report on Nations in Transit critically notes that "[a]ttacks on opposition parties, the press, and civil society organizations are becoming the norm […] as the spread of illiberal politics undermines the foundations and prospects for democracy." Even in countries such as Ukraine, once considered a frontrunner, "the window of opportunity has not closed [...], but it has shrunk."[49] In addition, state capture is increasingly dominating the public space – the infiltration of state institutions by entrenched clientele networks which are dominating decision-making processes of the country.[50]

A specific challenge in the region is the persistence of contested statehood: Five out of the six countries are involved in unresolved secession conflicts which are heavily influencing domestic politics and are a permanent source of confrontation between Russia and Europe. In consequence, large parts of the post-soviet space are governed by regimes which are not recognized by one of the main

49 Freedom House 2018: Confronting Illiberalism: Nations in Transit Releases 2018 edition, 11 April 2018, https://freedomhouse.org/article/confronting-illiberalism-nations-transit-releases-2018-edition (07/082018).

50 Solveig Richter 2017: Der Wolf im Schafspelz: Illegitime Herrschaft durch ‚State Capture' in Nachkriegs- und Transitionsgesellschaften, in: Zeitschrift für Friedens- und Konfliktforschung, 6: 2, 174–206.

external actors, making democracy promotion usually a secondary priority after conflict-management or stabilization to fill the security vacuum.[51]

Thus, linking the regional political challenges to the policies of major European or transatlantic democracy promoters, we can clearly see a "securitization": Democracy promotion as an instrument of soft power of the transatlantic community is increasingly being either sidelined by "hard power" politics (e.g., NATO, OSCE) or seen as an instrument for stabilization of the region instead of as a push for reform. As an example, in 2017 the EU adjusted the European Neighborhood Policy to "focus on stabilisation, resilience and security."[52] However, an academic consensus prevails that if democracy promotion is sub-ordinated to or aligned with geopolitical interests, it will fall short of yielding any significant impact and will even have counterproductive side-effects.[53]

7.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

External actors have to accept that in the medium-term, they will have to face illiberal politics and closing spaces in the context of strong normative contestation with Russia.[54] However, European states and the US still have a certain room for maneuver if they have the political will to support democratic change.

Firstly, in order to avoid further securitization of democracy promotion, less hard and more soft power should be applied: While it is important that security concerns are addressed within the transatlantic community, they should be dealt with by NATO. Norm-based organizations such as the EU and the Council of Europe should give greater priority to soft power in their foreign policy actions.

Secondly, and in line with this, governments following the democratic reform path need more incentives from the outside. The EU is the only organization having clear rewards in the form of a membership perspective which should be offered to countries making progress – despite Russian resistance. The case of Ukraine is crucial in this regard, since "both sides are showing signs of fatigue"[55] and it is necessary to keep the reform momentum in a key country where both Russia and the West are seeking influence.

Thirdly, Europeans should acknowledge the fact that transition to democracy in the post-soviet space is not a lost cause, since change is still being demanded bottom-up, as specifically youth orga-

---

51 See Judy Dempsey 2017: Eastern Europe's Yawning Gap, Carnegie Europe, 27 October 2017.

52 See European Commission 2017: Revised European Neighbourhood Policy: supporting stabilisation, resilience, security, Press Release, Brussels, 18 May 2017, http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-17-1334_en.htm (07/08/2018).

53 See Solveig Richter 2012: Two at One Blow? The EU and its Quest for Security and Democracy by Political Conditionality in the Western Balkans, in: Democratization, 19: 3, 507–534.

54 See Rosa Balfour/Nicolas Bouchet 2018: Supporting Civil Society in Eastern Europe and the Western Balkans: Old and New Challenges, The German Marshall Fund of the United States, Policy Brief, 27 February 2018; and Liik 2018 (footnote 46).

55 See Jarábik 2017 (footnote 48).

nizations and nascent anti-corruption initiatives illustrate. Intergovernmental, top-down instruments of democracy promotion usually fall short of inducing change in the face of either autocrats or oligarchs.[56] However, bottom-up instruments of civil society support alone often either involve merely technical assistance or put NGOs at risk (see Poppe/Wolff in this report). Only a combination of both – project support for pro-reform activists combined with political backing and vocal critics at the governmental level – might have a political impact. Flexible democracy promoters such as the EED which is keeping the flame of democratic reforms alive should receive more support as well.

8. DEMOCRACY PROMOTION IN THE ARAB WORLD

Vera van Hüllen

8.1 STATUS QUO

Even beyond the Arab uprisings of 2011, authoritarian rule has proven remarkably persistent in the Arab world. So far, Tunisia is the only country that has successfully completed the initial stages of a democratic transition. Elsewhere, steps towards political liberalization have not (yet) been translated into regime change, and we even see de-liberalizing tendencies (see Gerschewski in this report) and shrinking civic spaces (see Poppe/Wolff in this report) in many parts of the region. In addition, a number of protracted violent conflicts – most notably in Libya, Syria, and Yemen – that are the source of humanitarian crises and regional instability reveal the relevance of power politics and strategic interests in conceiving and especially in implementing democracy promotion policies. The uprisings, on the one hand, highlighted the overall failure of previous international democracy promotion efforts. On the other, they did not bring the democratic breakthrough that would have opened a window of opportunity for more legitimate and more effective democracy promotion efforts. Thus, it is not overly surprising that the initial enthusiasm of the main international democracy promoters in the region has quickly waned: The US rhetoric of disengagement from the region overshadows its ambition to promote democracy through its Middle East Partnership Initiative (see Poppe in this report) and the European Union's revised European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) of 2015 is silent on the 2011 Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity (see Grimm in this report). While the G7 are still engaged in the Deauville Partnership with Arab Countries in Transition launched in 2011, they have silently pulled out of their earlier G8 Broader Middle East and North Africa (BMENA) Initiative with its emblematic Forum for the Future.[57]

---

56 See Solveig Richter/Natasha Wunsch 2019: Money, Power, Glory: The Linkage between EU Conditionality and Domestic Politics in the Western Balkans, forthcoming in: Journal of European Public Policy.

57 The Deauville Partnership supports economic and political reforms in Egypt, Jordan, Libya, Morocco, Tunisia, and Yemen in cooperation with partners from regional and international financial institutions, not least through a newly created MENA Transition Fund. The last BMENA Initiative Forum for the Future took place in 2013 in Cairo and attracted much criticism in light of the political situation in the host country.

8.2 CHALLENGES

In the Arab world, the backlash against democracy promotion described in the introduction plays out in two ways. First, the credibility of international actors as champions of democracy and human rights has been severely compromised. Charges of hypocrisy and paternalism are strong and further reinforced as 'Northwestern' actors increasingly face undemocratic movements and developments 'at home.' Second, democracy promoters in the Arab world are increasingly facing competition from other regional and international actors who promote alternative models of democratic or openly authoritarian rule. Beyond Russia and China, these also include regional players such as Saudi Arabia and Turkey. As a result, both the norms and the way they are promoted are increasingly contested, and international actors can count less than ever on the 'natural' attractiveness of their policies to state and non-state actors in the region.

In addition, violent conflicts in Syria, Yemen, and Libya are overshadowing international democracy promotion in three ways. First of all, the concern for ending hostilities and initiating a peace process is eclipsing a narrower democracy promotion agenda for the moment. Second, the transnationalized nature of these 'civil wars' reflects much deeper regional and global conflicts. The intra-regional rivalry between Saudi Arabia and Iran, the Arab-Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the Kurdish question in Iraq, Syria, and Turkey, as well as global tensions between the US, Russia, and Iran, are barriers to a more stable and peaceful regional order. Finally, the spillover of violence and the sheer number of refugees are directly destabilizing the political situation in many countries of the region and highlight other foreign policy interests that compete with the objective of promoting democracy. In particular the issue of migration has become a concern for European actors and is putting further strain on the idea of foreign policies consistent with normative ambitions, as illustrated by the EU-Turkey refugee deal of 2016 (see Grimm in this report).

Depending on specific conditions in individual countries, international actors face fundamentally different challenges regarding their potential – positive as well as negative – impact. While a democratic transition opens a window of opportunity for external actors to successfully support endogenous dynamics of democratization in principle, the process of establishing and consolidating democratic institutions in Tunisia is fragile at best. Fragmentation, tensions, and protests mark the political process, put under stress not only by terrorist attacks and political violence but also by slow economic growth and increasing socio-economic grievances. These developments risk feeding into processes of radicalization and a broader disenchantment with democracy's inability to deliver on the promise of 'dignity,' including both freedom and employment. Only by successfully – and democratically – addressing the current security and socio-economic challenges, will democratic consolidation stand a chance in Tunisia and make it an attractive model for other Arab countries.

Most countries in the region have remained under authoritarian rule, however, and thus continue to present the real 'hard cases' for international democracy promotion. On the one hand, in times of shrinking civic spaces (see Poppe/Wolff in this report) and open resistance to external attempts at democracy promotion, international actors often find it almost impossible to implement their measures, especially democracy assistance projects targeting civil society organizations. On the other

hand, past experience with the implementation of measures in cooperation with authoritarian regimes suggests that democracy promotion efforts are, at best, ineffective or even counterproductive, and stabilize incumbent rulers.[58] Steps in political liberalization are in most cases not a sign of substantive processes of democratization but part of authoritarian survival strategies.[59] Measures designed to improve good governance can boost the regimes' output legitimacy or even build their repressive capacities, a (potential) 'downside' of functional cooperation described by Freyburg in this report. Competing foreign policy interests in the fields of economic and security cooperation, ranging from energy security to the management of migration flows, often curb the effective leverage of external actors and make political conditionalities both ineffective and an additional burden to their credibility. Furthermore, handing out rewards or withholding sanctions in contradiction of their own standards can create an impression of international approval of authoritarian practices where none is warranted.

8.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

Following the maxim of being credible and, if nothing else, of doing no harm, international democracy promoters should clearly distinguish between countries that have already completed a democratic transition and authoritarian regimes that might or might not be engaged in processes of political liberalization, and then design their policies accordingly.

While Tunisia presents, in principle, the most favorable context for international democracy promotion efforts in the region, external actors still face a number of challenges regarding the legitimacy and effectiveness of their efforts. International democracy promoters at all levels (governments, non-state actors/civil society) need to accompany the process of democratic consolidation in Tunisia in the long run without compromising its quality by heavy-handed interference. They should continue to generously offer their support in terms of expertise and resources, when requested to do so by Tunisia. In order to promote the emergence of a Tunisian democratic culture, they should seek to stimulate domestic contestation and deliberation in public debates and democratic decision-making in interaction with, but not dominated by external actors and 'global' norms. They should do so by raising questions and concerns, by suggesting options and alternatives, and by refraining from providing specific answers and ready-made solutions. In addition to the genuinely political side of this process, they need to pay attention to the broader economic, social, and security context of democratic consolidation and regard trade and investment policies as flanking measures. In particular, global institutions like the WTO and IMF need to make sure that the social implications of economic reforms do not jeopardize popular support for democracy.

---

58 Vera van Hüllen 2017: Resistance to International Democracy Promotion in Morocco and Tunisia, in: Third World Thematics: A TWQ Journal 2: 5, 637–657.

59 Vera van Hüllen 2015: EU Democracy Promotion and the Arab Spring. International Cooperation and Authoritarianism, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

By contrast, the room for maneuver in democracy promotion vis-à-vis the remaining authoritarian regimes in the region is much more limited. In order to restore the credibility of democracy promotion in authoritarian contexts, international actors need to self-critically address the dilemma of democracy promotion and pragmatic cooperation with authoritarian regimes (see Freyburg in this report). Heeding the premise of 'do no harm,' democracy promoters should avoid increasing the repressive capacities of authoritarian rulers. Even more liberalized regimes like Morocco also used physical force to suppress protests in 2011, and the case of Egypt demonstrates how authoritarian regimes are increasingly using legal proceedings to persecute their opposition. If other strategic interests suggest support for security sector reforms, border management, or even modernization of the judiciary, e.g. in Libya and other countries of transit, these activities should not be 'sold' under the label of democracy promotion. International actors should also avoid giving legitimacy to authoritarian rulers through their implicit or explicit recognition as democratic or democratizing, as they have frequently done in the early stages of transition in Tunisia and Yemen, but also in seemingly liberalizing countries like Jordan and Morocco. Given the lack of success in helping to bring about reforms that substantively democratize authoritarian regimes, international actors should tone down their rhetoric and avoid pursuing policies that are easily unmasked as window dressing. Further, they should refrain from formulating political conditionalities if they lack the political will and/or capacity to consistently apply their own rewards and sanctions, which seems to be the case most of the time. In particular the EU and its member states have to find ways of reconciling their normative ambitions and strategic interests in the ENP in order to avoid charges of both hypocrisy and complacency. Instead, international actors engaged in the Arab world should seek to promote spaces for democratization or at least broader political participation and open debates without shifting the balance of power in ways that do not reflect public opinion. Using both diplomatic tools and, if requested by the target regime, democracy assistance, they should support reforms in the legal framework of civil society, the media, and other spheres of political life and civic activism. The objective must be to level the playing field rather than to selectively support individual players. International actors should use more indirect ways of promoting fundamental norms and values conducive to pro-democratic mobilization through functional cooperation (see Freyburg in this report). Supporting the provision of public goods and services, such as health, education, or even water, can indeed entail experiences of impartiality and fairness for a broader public.

9. DEMOCRACY PROMOTION IN AFRICA

Julia Leininger

9.1 STATUS QUO[60]

Africa has one of the most elaborated regimes for protecting and promoting democracy worldwide. Inspired by the Organization of American States (see Wolff in this report), the Charter of the African Union (AU), adopted in 2000, includes a reference to the principles of democracy and human rights and established unconstitutional changes of government as a ground for suspension. Overall, attempts to pro-actively promote democracy have remained limited, but on several occasions the AU has applied its norm against "unconstitutional changes of government" to either protect democratically elected governments against unconstitutional threats or to defend existing political regimes against incumbents' unconstitutional attempts to extend presidential term limits. The same pattern holds for the Economic Commission of West African States (ECOWAS), which is the most active organization at the sub-regional level.[61] While these strong regional norms have resulted in an increase in more reactive measures for protecting democratic institutions when their survival was at stake (e.g. military coups, third term attempts etc.), no regime to pro-actively support and promote democracy is in place yet. Supporting democracy is still left to non-regional donors such as the US, the European Union and its member states as well as international and non-governmental organizations.[62]

Varying regional and non-regional efforts to protect and promote democracy mirror the different regime trends on the continent. Regular elections are held in most of the 54 countries, but only 19 are generally considered to be democracies, while the others are electoral autocracies with limited civil rights, accountability and rule of law. However, at least when considering the size of the populations of individual countries and focusing on Sub-Saharan Africa, this is the only world region which experienced a slight increase in its level of democracy in 2017.[63] In recent years, autocratic regimes unexpectedly opened up in the Gambia (2016), Zimbabwe (2017) and the second most populated African country, Ethiopia (2018).

9.2 CHALLENGES

Democracy promotion in Africa faces a series of important challenges. The first concerns the well-known issue of potentially *competing foreign-policy interests*. The two most prominent examples are

60 This chapter largely focuses on democracy promotion in Sub-Saharan Africa. For more details on North Africa see van Hüllen in this report.

61 See Julia Leininger 2015: Against All Odds: Strong Democratic Norms in the African Union, in: Tanja A. Börzel/Vera van Hüllen (eds.): Governance Transfer by Regional Organizations, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 51–67.

62 Simone Dietrich/Joseph Wright 2015: Foreign Aid Allocation Tactics and Democratic Change in Africa, in: The Journal of Politics 77: 1, 216–234.

63 See Lührmann et al. 2018 (footnote 10).

security interests, and the current focus of the EU on reducing migration to Europe in response to the so-called refugee crisis. In addition, the prevalence of fragile statehood and violent conflict in a series of African countries has also led donor governments to prioritize state building and conflict management over the more ambitious goal of democratic transformation.[64]

Second, changing *regional and global geopolitics* are weakening international alliances for democracy promotion in Africa. In recent years, African countries have diversified their political and economic relations and, as a result, have become less dependent on traditional donor countries from the OECD world. Such diversification concerns, in particular, China, but also India, Turkey, Japan and (to a lesser extent) Morocco. Although still important in terms of resources (trade, investment, aid) and bound by a joint colonial legacy, cooperation with European countries and the US has been reduced to becoming one among several pillars of Africa countries' external relations.[65] This has undermined the potential for democracy promoters to push for democratic reforms through political conditionalities.

Third, the *normative competition* for the "right" politico-economic model has increased during the last decade. For most parts of the period since 1990, debates on development in Sub-Saharan Africa have centered on the idea that good governance and democracy would lead to more societies that are prosperous. Yet, in recent years, democracy has lost appeal not only among African political elites but also among increasing parts of the population. This trend has been nurtured by the slow progress in human development and persisting inequalities as well as elites' rent-seeking and corruption that have persisted even in relatively democratic regimes. Despite continuing support for democracy as the most preferable political regime in many African countries,[66] positive economic and social developments in a few authoritarian regimes such as Rwanda and Ethiopia have further strengthened a public discourse questioning democracy. Global dynamics also play a crucial role. International cooperation with economically successful authoritarian regimes, in particular China, increases the appeal of authoritarian development models.[67] China, in fact, has been offering political advice about the model of the authoritarian developmental state to some African governments, has opened culture institutes to engage with African societies and runs large programs of technological knowledge transfer. Democratic backsliding in the US and Europe has further undermined democracy as a model of development (see the introduction to this report). For instance, the European Union's hesitant reaction to democratic backsliding in its member states and neighboring countries (e.g. Hungary, Poland, Turkey) lends inadvertent support to autocratic member states in African regional organizations which oppose AU democracy support.

---

64 See Stephen Brown 2013: Democracy Promotion in Africa, in: Nic Cheeseman/David M. Anderson/Andrea Scheibler (eds.): Routledge Handbook of African Politics, London: Routledge, 404–13.

65 Sven Grimm/Christine Hackenesch 2017: China in Africa: What Challenges for a Reforming European Union Development Policy? Illustrations from Country Cases, in: Development Policy Review 35: 4, 549–566.

66 See, for instance, the results of the Afrobarometer surveys of round 7.

67 Grimm/Hackenesch 2017 (footnote 65).

Fourth, *symbolic politics* also matters. This not only concerns the negative signals that donor governments send when applying double standards and/or prioritizing other foreign-policy goals over democratic norms. In this context, post-colonial politics are another example with immediate relevance for democracy promotion. For instance, former colonial powers such as France and Germany have refused to return cultural goods which were stolen from African populations in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Although the French government currently seems to be re-positioning itself on this issue, the refusal of both countries to acknowledge their unethical behavior in the past has undermined their credibility as democracy promoters. Why should African governments subscribe to the 'democratic cause' while donors defend their own autocratic behavior in the past?

In addition to these specific challenges to democracy promotion, it is also important to consider a series of interrelated *megatrends* that are likely to fundamentally transform African societies during the next three decades.[68] In terms of demographic change, the African population is expected to increase to 2 billion people by 2050, with the majority being younger than 18 years. At the same time, urbanization will accelerate, with two thirds of the population living in cities by 2050. If the current trend continues without major changes, two thirds of urban citizens will live in slums. Both trends are likely to reinforce an ongoing third trend, namely an increase in local conflicts. These societal changes, on the one hand, provide the opportunity for stronger social mobilization for the common good and against exclusive politics. And, in fact, recent years have already seen social movements and grassroots organizations actively challenging exclusive African politics despite a shrinking civic space (see Poppe/Wolff in this report). On the other hand, low-intensity conflicts might increase further and escalate if the demands of the youth remain unaddressed and if no progress is made in building sustainable and inclusive cities. This means that, while democracy promotion can hardly stop or even reverse these megatrends, it can contribute to mitigating emerging conflicts.

9.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

Strong democratic norms, African regional organizations, and different regime trajectories are the starting point for any effort to support democratization in African societies. In adjusting to the challenges just outlined, external democracy promoters should start by re-enforcing their recognition of the existing democratic norms they share with African partner governments and acknowledging the different regime trajectories on the continent. More specifically, I recommend the following:

The problematique of *competing interests* requires a clear commitment to democratic norms without giving up other foreign policy interests. OECD donors cannot fall behind in their economic commitments to African governments, but they need to balance these commitments if they want to support democracy.

68 Julia Leininger 2018: The Many Paces of African Societies, in: Dirk Messner/Lutz Meyer (eds.) forthcoming: 2030 – Deutschland und die Welt, Berlin: ECON, 130–139.

In the context of diversified external relations (*geopolitics*), democracy promotion must go beyond focusing on domestic political systems or the support of regional organizations. More diplomatic action is needed to engage in a dialogue not only with African governments but also with other external partners of African governments. For instance, seeking an informal and confidential exchange about cooperation approaches in Africa with the governments of China, India or Morocco is a necessary condition for understanding the opportunities and challenges of democracy promotion in Africa better.

Normative doubts about democracy as the "right" politico-economic model for African societies can be countered through clear and open positioning of democracy promoters. Given the challenges to democracy within the OECD world, this is a task to be tackled first in donor societies themselves. Being open and transparent about the problems OECD democracies are facing is one entry point for changing the culture of cooperation between African and OECD governments.

Democratic *symbolic politics* require that negative signals must be avoided. This includes the example of stolen cultural goods which has clearly undermined the credibility of democracy promoters. Addressing spill-over effects of different sectoral policies is thus relevant for the success of democracy promotion.

Finally, addressing the implications of the different *megatrends*, calls for more integrated approaches by donors and multilateral organizations. If structural change is to be beneficial for the people, policies must be inclusive. Thus, sectoral approaches such as economic reforms or conflict management and crisis prevention must be more integrative with regard to democracy promotion (see Freyburg in this report). For instance, in order to avoid exclusive economic policies, any economic program should be accompanied by measures to support more inclusive political and economic institutions.

10. DEMOCRACY PROMOTION IN THE AMERICAS

Jonas Wolff

10.1 STATUS QUO

The regional system of democracy promotion in the Americas is in serious trouble. Although the Western Hemisphere, still, consists almost entirely of democratic regimes and has one of the most advanced regimes of democracy and human rights protection world-wide, established institutions and practices are currently largely paralyzed. At the moment there are no regional actors – neither the former US hegemon, nor regional organizations or individual Latin American states – that have sufficient credibility, capacity and political will to respond to the serious challenges to, and in part open crises of, democracy that can be observed in the region. This paralysis is due to several factors, but a key problem is that, in today's Americas, there is open disagreement about (1) what democracy actually means, (2) which activities of external democracy promotion are normatively appropriate and which not, and (3) who is entitled to engage in such activities to begin with.

The current situation reflects a process of normative disintegration and fragmentation which signals a clear turning away from the trajectory on which the region embarked in 1990. Enabled by the almost region-wide establishment of democratic regimes and the end of the Cold War, the 1990s saw an emerging consensus that included a commitment to representative, liberal democracy as well as general agreement on the importance and legitimacy of external democracy promotion. At the level of the Organization of American States (OAS), this was reflected in a continuous strengthening of regional norms and instruments that provided for the protection and promotion of democracy in member states. This process of norm strengthening started in 1991 with the "Santiago Commitment to Democracy and the Renewal of the Inter-American System" and Resolution 1080 on "Representative Democracy," and culminated in 2001 in the adoption of the Inter-American Democratic Charter.[69] These institutional developments were accompanied by an expanding – if far from coherent and comprehensive – practice of collective responses to threats to democracy in the region. Even if far from coherent and comprehensive, such responses contributed to preventing or reversing breaches of the constitutional order in quite a few cases.[70] In addition, bilateral policies of democracy promotion expanded significantly – most importantly, on the part of the United States – and were generally welcomed, or at least accepted, by Latin American governments. While the OAS largely focused on the protection of democracy against outright domestic threats, US democracy promotion has been more actively engaged in shaping the very characteristics of democracy in the region. Additional democracy promoters in the region include the EU and individual European member states such as Germany or Spain. By and large, however, the role of these extra-regional actors is relatively minor in terms of both the economic resources they invest and the political leverage they can apply.

---

69 For an overview and key data and documents that are referred to here and later in the chapter, see Jorge Heine/Brigitte Weiffen 2015: 21st Century Democracy Promotion in the Americas. Standing Up for the Policy, Abingdon: Routledge.

70 See Dexter S. Boniface 2007: The OAS's Mixed Record, in: Thomas Legler/Sharon F. Lean/Dexter S. Boniface (eds.): Promoting Democracy in the Americas, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 40–62, 46.

10.2 CHALLENGES

The new struggle over democracy (promotion) that has characterized inter-American relations since the turn of the century has several dimensions and sources.[71] First, with the election of a series of more of less leftist presidents across the region, several governments – including, most notably, in Venezuela, Bolivia, and Ecuador – started to promote conceptions of democracy that deliberately challenge the liberal model of democracy. More specifically, in the OAS, the regional consensus on "representative democracy" was now explicitly questioned in the name of "participatory" and "social/ist" notions of democracy. These same governments also adopted a particularly critical stance vis-à-vis US democracy promotion, which they regarded as neo-imperialist meddling aiming at the destabilization of leftist governments. Second, and related, the US government under President George W. Bush did its best to delegitimize democracy promotion, most notably by equating democracy promotion with military regime change (as in the case of the Iraq War) and by offering at least tacit support to the failed 2002 coup against Venezuela's then president Hugo Chávez.

As a consequence, debates within the OAS have been characterized by severe normative disagreements, which are intimately connected with conflicts of power and interest.[72] This has contributed to the failure to find common inter-American responses to open threats to democracy in the region. In the case of the failed coup in Venezuela in 2002, a fairly accommodating US response undermined the joint and swift Latin American condemnation of Chávez's removal. Responding to the 2009 coup in Honduras, the OAS initially unequivocally rejected the forced deposition of elected President Zelaya; but the longer the post-coup government remained in power, the more governments – including most prominently the US – veered away from this position. In other cases, in which elected presidents were removed in contested impeachment proceedings, such as in Paraguay (2012) and Brazil (2016), governments could not agree on whether what had happened meant a rupture of the constitutional order or not and, consequently, there was no common position or decision taken at the regional level. The same holds true for the gradual erosion of democracy in Venezuela. In the latter case, the OAS has continued to be paralyzed by the confrontation between Venezuela's allies in the region, which systematically downplay the increasingly undeniable undermining of core democratic norms and institutions by the Maduro government on the one hand and the US government and its allies, in this case including OAS Secretary-General Almagro, which had taken an outright partisan approach well before Maduro openly undermined Venezuela's democratic institutions, and has thus only contributed to further escalating the Venezuelan crisis. This is not to say that the OAS is entirely paralyzed when it comes to democracy-related activities. When it comes to electoral observation missions, the OAS is in fact still serving a useful purpose – such as in the cases of contested elections in Ecuador and Honduras (both in 2017). In the latter case, however, individual states – and, once again, most notably the US – have undermined the OAS demand for a rerun election by recognizing the re-election of president Juan Orlando Hernández.

---

71 See Jonas Wolff 2018: Democracy, in: Anne Tittor et al. (eds.): The Routledge Handbook to Political Economy and Governance in the Americas, London: Routledge, forthcoming.

72 See Andreas E. Feldmann 2015: Divisions at the Heart of Latin American Regional Democracy Efforts, http://carnegieendowment.org/files/RDN_FeldmanN_03132015.pdf; Heine/Weiffen (footnote 69), chapters 4–6.

In addition to ideological differences and related normative disagreements that obstruct collective regional responses to political crises, these very crises themselves also increasingly undermine international efforts at promoting and protecting democracy in the Americas. In the past, US democracy promotion was also contested, not least because of the history of US interference in the region that rarely followed pro-democracy norms. But with President Trump it is also the very state of democracy in the US itself that is under serious doubt, which has serious negative effects on the image of liberal democracy. This combines with a lack of political will when it comes to democracy promotion under the Trump administration, even if at the operational level many programs continue (see Poppe in this report).

During the years of the George W. Bush administration, the Latin American response to the loss of credibility on the part of the US was a focus on intra-Latin American relations. This was, for instance, reflected in the creation of regional organizations that competed with the OAS and were deliberately set up by Latin American states without US participation. The most important ones include the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR), established in 2008, and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), founded in 2011. CELAC and UNASUR, in fact, established their own democracy clauses. And while CELAC never managed to become more than a forum for intra- and inter-regional dialogue, UNASUR initially developed an interesting dynamic – and, indeed, played a constructive role in a few domestic political crises (such as, for instance, in Bolivia in 2008). In addition, in the first decade of the new century, Brazil under the government of President Lula became an increasingly active regional power in terms of both foreign policy and development cooperation[73] that acted as a moderating force in quite a few intra-regional conflicts. With the election of conservative president Mauricio Macri in Argentina (2015) and the impeachment of Dilma Rousseff in Brazil (2016), however, UNASUR is now just as divided and paralyzed as the OAS. And the interim government of Michael Temer has all but abandoned Brazil's strategic engagement with and in the region. Given the highly problematic impeachment of Rousseff, the Temer government's poor domestic legitimacy and the massive corruption scandals shaking Brazil, the country currently lacks both the capacity and the credibility to play a leading role in any efforts relating to promoting or protecting democracy in the region. These changes in both Brazil and the US (but also in several other countries in the region) are also reflected in a turning inward of political attention: at least when compared with their predecessors, current governments pay significantly less attention to regional affairs.

10.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

There is currently no significant actor – neither a powerful government, nor a plausible alliance of governments, nor a regional organization – that is credible, willing and able to promote and/or protect democracy in the Americas. Polarization-cum-fragmentation significantly undermines the capacity of collective action at the regional level. No simple or immediate solutions to this problem are

73 Here development cooperation is broadly understood to include Brazilian involvement through state institutions (such as the Brazilian development bank BNDES) and through private Brazilian companies (such as the by now notorious Odebrecht).

available. When adjusting democracy promotion strategies to the difficult regional context, the above analysis suggests three overall recommendations:

In terms of *actors*: as long as official regional institutions are paralyzed when it comes to responses to democratic crises, informal ad hoc coalitions of actors (states and non-state actors, such as elder statespersons) offer a better alternative (such as in the case of the ongoing mediation in the Venezuelan crisis). Within regional organizations, it would be helpful to enable open debates about the diverging views – so that they could at least serve as arenas for intra-regional debates.

When thinking about proper *instruments*, the focus at the moment should probably be less on promoting democracy in any ambitious sense but rather on conflict management and mediation, on the one hand, and electoral observation, on the other.

Finally, as concerns the thorny issue of *norms*: given the level of contestation of democratic norms, it might be useful to try to regain some regional consensus by focusing on fundamental basics of democratic rule. The task should not be to agree on what precisely democracy is, but on benchmarks that help identify clear-cut breaches of democratic rule.

These suggestions also apply to extra-regional actors such as the EU and individual European states, which have not been discussed in this chapter but whose democracy promotion policies do play a certain (if limited) role in the region. In general terms, these actors should focus on supporting political settlements both within and between the countries of the region, with a view to strengthening the intra-Latin American capacity to collectively promote and protect democracy.

ABOUT THE EDP NETWORK

The Research Network "External Democracy Promotion" (EDP) is a collaborative interdisciplinary and inter-institutional project of German-speaking scholars from the social sciences. Our main focus is on international and comparative studies. Participants come from universities and research institutes, namely the two Leibniz institutes: the Peace Research Institute Frankfurt (PRIF) and the WZB Berlin Social Science Center as well as the German Development Institute (DIE) and four universities (Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Erfurt, Konstanz, Lüneburg). The University of St. Gallen is an associate member. Currently, the network is funded by the German Leibniz Association under the Leibniz Competition 2015–2018, which we would like to gratefully acknowledge.

The network members' joint interest is in the range of cross-border activities by states, non-state actors and international organizations aimed at establishing, improving or defending democracy in third countries. Our goal is to deepen and focus research on democracy promotion as well as strengthen policy advice, and we regularly come together to discuss our research as well as current political developments, collaborate on publication projects, and present our work to academic audiences as well as the politically interested public. Currently, our main activities and publications focus on the crucial but broadly neglected issue of interaction in democracy promotion. Our work is guided by the assumption that practitioners and scholars alike have yet to recognize and untangle the serious challenges that are posed by the interactive nature of democracy promotion – challenges that have implications for both our ways of studying democracy promotion as well as, in policy terms, for democracy promotion's potential to be mutually agreed-upon and beneficial, peaceful, and minimally invasive with regard to the recipient's collective self-determination.

If you are interested in learning more about our projects, publications and events, go to: https://www.external-democracy-promotion.eu/ Our website regularly reports on the network's activities, offers subscriptions to a bi-annual newsletter, and issues the EDP Wire, where we post and discuss a range of issues that emanate from our research and that are important to us. Here you will find – in English or German – opinion pieces, book reviews, conference reports, and important announcements: https://www.external-democracy-promotion.eu/edp-wire/

The EDP Network members who have contributed to this report are:

Dr. **Tina Freyburg** is full professor of Comparative Politics in the School of Economics and Political Science at the University of St. Gallen, Switzerland. In her research Tina studies the chances and risks that emerge for democracy in a globalizing and digitalizing world. Current projects examine the perception and quality of democracy beyond the nation-state and the promotion of democracy through conditionality and private business. She serves as member of the international advisory board of the peer-reviewed journal "Democratization."

Dr. **Johannes Gerschewski** is a research fellow at the Research Unit on the Comparative Analysis of Political Systems at the Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin. His research interests involve comparative political regime research, the analysis of democratization processes, and methodological questions.

Johannes is currently studying the stability of East Asia's autocracies and dealing with questions of legitimacy in young democracies and autocracies

Dr. **Sonja Grimm** is senior lecturer (Akademische Rätin) at the Department of Politics and Public Administration, University of Konstanz, Germany. Currently, she is an interim professor at the University of Basel. Sonja specializes in democracy and democratization studies, especially the study of state-building and transition to democracy in developing, fragile and post-conflict states, international democracy promotion, development cooperation and EU integration.

Dr. **Julia Leininger** chairs the research program "Transformations of Political Order: Governance, Values and Peace" at the German Development Institute (DIE) in Bonn. She also co-coordinates DIE's Africa research and teaches at the University of Duisburg-Essen, in DIE's renowned Postgraduate Course for Future Professionals in Development Policy, and is a regular faculty member of DIE's Global Governance School. Julia's comparative research focuses on explaining political transformation, social cohesion in Africa and international engagement to support democratization.

Dr. **Annika Elena Poppe** is project director and senior researcher at the Peace Research Institute Frankfurt's (PRIF) department "Intrastate Conflict," and has served as coordinator of the EDP Network since 2015. She is a member of the International Consortium on Closing Civic Spaces (iCon) hosted by CSIS and worked as a consultant for the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ) in 2016–2017. Her research focuses on US foreign policy and democracy promotion, and the global phenomenon of closing civic spaces.

Dr. **Solveig Richter** is assistant professor for "International Conflict Management" at the Willy Brandt School of Public Policy at the University of Erfurt. She concentrates primarily on the effectiveness of various instruments of democracy promotion and specializes in the connection between democracy and peace. Here, the core focus lies on the European Union and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

Dr. **Vera van Hüllen** is assistant professor for International Relations at Leuphana University of Lüneburg and is currently serving as the executive director of the Institute of Political Science. Her current research on international democracy promotion focuses on the role of regional organizations (including the Arab League and the Gulf Cooperation Council) and international institutions more broadly in regime transformation and change in the Middle East and North Africa.

Dr. **Jonas Wolff** is head of the research department "Intrastate Conflict" at the Peace Research Institute Frankfurt (PRIF) and a member of PRIF's executive board. His research focuses on the transformation of political orders, contentious politics, international democracy promotion, and Latin American politics. Jonas teaches at the universities of Frankfurt and Kassel. He is experienced in policy consulting (e.g. German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ), Friedrich Ebert Foundation) and is a member of the International Consortium on Closing Civic Spaces (iCon).

RECENT PUBLICATIONS

PRIF REPORT

PRIF Reports offer background analyses on political events and developments and present research findings.

Gromes, Thorsten (2018): Grenzen rationalistischer Erklärungen für Krieg. Der Kollaps des Waffenstillstands in Kroatien 1995, PRIF Report 12/2018, Frankfurt/M.

Armborst, Andreas/Biene, Janusz/Coester, Marc/Greuel, Frank/Milbradt, Björn/Nehlsen, Inga (2018): Evaluation in der Extremismusprävention: Ansätze und Kontroversen, PRIF Report 11/2018, Frankfurt/M.

www.hsfk.de/PRIF-Reports
www.hsfk.de/HSFK-Reports

PRIF SPOTLIGHT

PRIF Spotlights discuss current political and social issues.

Gromes, Thorsten (2018): Bosnien und Herzegowina. Der Wahlkampf spiegelt ein gespaltenes Land, PRIF Spotlight 11/2018, Frankfurt/M.

Richter, Solveig/Wolff, Jonas (2018): Colombia Under the Duque Government. Policy options to strengthen the peace process, PRIF Spotlight 10/2018, Frankfurt/M.

www.hsfk.de/PRIF-Spotlights

PRIF BLOG

PRIF Blog presents articles on current political issues and debates that are relevant for peace and conflict research.

PRIF BLOG

https://blog.prif.org/

PRIF Reports and PRIF Spotlights are open-access publications and are available for download at www.prif.org. If you wish to receive our publications via email or in print, please contact publikationen@hsfk.de.

www.facebook.com/HSFK.PRIF
www.twitter.com/HSFK_PRIF
https://blog.prif.org/

Is democracy in crisis throughout the world and how alarmed should we be? And what about international democracy promotion – is there a need for reconceptualization? This PRIF Report is a joint policy paper written by members of the research network "External Democracy Promotion" (EDP Network). It aims at giving a concise and pointed overview of key trends and challenges that characterize the field of international democracy promotion today, and it offers recommendations for democracy promoters and policy makers on how to continue a more promising engagement. The report is intended for practitioners, academics and all those interested in the state and future of democracy globally.

EDP NETWORK //

DEMOCRACY PROMOTION IN TIMES OF UNCERTAINTY

TRENDS AND CHALLENGES

ISBN 978-3-946459-41-5

PRIF Peace Research Institute Frankfurt
HSFK Leibniz-Institut Hessische Stiftung Friedens- und Konfliktforschung
Leibniz Association