Supporting democracy: engaging and developing policies with transition countries – the role of rising global actors?
Monday 23 April – Wednesday 25 April 2012 | WP 1177
Conference report

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Introduction and key points

Rising democratic powers such as Brazil, Indonesia, India, South Africa, and Turkey serve as powerful examples of the universal appeal of democracy and possess unique experiences with democratization. They have a valuable role to play in international efforts to advance political reform and democracy, but are often hesitant to cooperate on these issues with established democratic powers in the United States and Europe. Policy-makers, analysts, and civil society representatives from these rising democracies and their counterparts in established democratic powers met in Istanbul with the following aims: to explore and improve understanding of differing conceptions of how best to support democracy internationally; to identify how to build cooperation in concrete situations; and to shape realistic expectations about potential collaboration between rising global actors and established democratic powers.

Key issues arising from the discussion include:

1. Both established and rising democratic powers are interested in supporting democracy and human rights abroad and have taken various actions to do so. They often differ, however, in the proper methods for such support, with rising global actors generally preferring engagement and being less comfortable than traditional powers with coercive actions such as sanctions or, exceptionally, military action. This heterogeneity of approaches sometimes causes diplomatic tensions, but can also be valuable in situations where pressure or dialogue alone is unlikely to be effective. The differences in approach between traditional and rising democratic powers can also be overstated, however, with rising global actors sometimes assuming that Western powers rely more heavily on coercive means of democracy support than is the case in practice.

2. Distrust over foreign policy intentions continues to be a major obstacle to greater cooperation on democracy support. Countries in the developing world often believe that the democracy promotion rhetoric of established powers hides more self-interested objectives, though the level of scepticism varies considerably both within and among countries. Rising global actors can also be subject to such suspicions when they engage on democracy issues.

3. There is often a trade-off between neutrality and influence in democracy support. Supporting democracy in neighbouring countries is complicated as there are likely to be countervailing interests at stake, yet rising global actors are most likely to have both influence and an interest in engaging within their own regions. Established democratic powers are sometimes regarded with more suspicion than rising democracies in transition countries, but they continue to offer the vast majority of democracy support resources and may have significantly more diplomatic leverage.

4. Rising democracies sometimes see democracy somewhat differently from established democratic powers, putting more emphasis on the importance of socio-economic rights and social justice. This can be a source of tension if it becomes a debate about whether socio-economic or civil and political rights are more important, but it could also open up new opportunities for cooperation around development issues.

5. Most democracy assistance does not involve the contentious geopolitical issues of sanctions or intervention and there are already important examples of international
cooperation on democracy support. These include often low-profile triangular or minilateral cooperation between traditional donors, rising democracies, and recipient countries; an increased role for regional bodies in democratic norm-setting and enforcement; and international institutions devoted to democracy or related issues such as transparency and participation.

- While greater collaboration among democracy supporters is valuable, it is important to remember that recipient country needs and priorities must drive the agenda. Democratization is a domestically-driven process and external actors are only supporting actors. Domestic pro-democracy actors often have a complicated relationship with external democracy support, expressing both frustration at the lack of consistent international support for their cause and wariness about aggressive foreign interference, especially from Northern powers.

Approaches to democracy support

Perspectives on democracy and human rights

1. Democratization processes reflect the particular historical and political experiences of their communities and must be driven primarily by citizens. Democracy cannot be imposed from the outside. External actors play at best a supporting role in democratic change, which often happens at unpredictable moments.

2. Democracies nevertheless share some common principles, such as equality, respect for fundamental rights, regular and fair elections, and the rule of law. These principles are reflected in United Nation treaties and other international agreements.

3. Some argue that Northern countries tend to over-emphasize civil and political rights at the expense of the economic, social, and cultural rights which are usually the top priority of developing nations. They advocate a greater role for rising global actors in bringing issues of economic justice and development to the forefront of international human rights debates. Others warn that undue emphasis on economic rights allows authoritarian governments to justify their repression, and instead urge simultaneous promotion of both socio-economic and civil and political rights.

4. All democracies struggle with the proper balance between the will of the majority and respect for individual rights, but this is a particularly difficult challenge in transitional situations. In countries like Turkey, for example, majoritarian pressure is sometimes needed to reform authoritarian remnants in the state. Other governments worry about the concentration of the press in a few private hands. At the same time, over-reliance on majoritarianism in many countries undermines freedom of expression, freedom of religion, and the protection of minority rights. This is a difficult issue for the international community to address, as governments can claim a popular mandate for their policies.

Perspectives on democracy support

5. Both traditional powers such as the United States and Europe and rising democratic powers engage in some forms of democracy assistance abroad, and struggle with how to balance support for democratic values with other national interests. Rising global actors are generally more sceptical of making democracy promotion an explicit part of their foreign policies than the US and Europe, but they nevertheless take various actions which advance democracy and human rights outside their borders.

6. Countries support democracy abroad for a number of different reasons. They are sometimes forced to pay attention to democracy issues due to unexpected global events. The United States, for instance, is expected to respond whenever there is a democratic crisis or breakthrough somewhere in the world. Some argue Turkey did not emphasize democracy in its foreign policy before 2011, preferring instead a policy of “zero problems with neighbours,” but the Arab Spring and particularly the crisis in Syria has pushed it to take a stronger pro-democracy stance.
7. Democracy support can also be a means to help shape regional norms and ensure regional stability. The European Union includes democracy promotion as one of its core objectives and promotes a democratic political community in Europe. Indonesia feels that greater democracy in Asia would help secure the future of the region and open up new avenues for regional cooperation. While countries tend to be most interested in supporting democracy in their own regions, they are likely to have significant countervailing interests given the need to get along with neighbours.

8. Domestic political pressure is usually not a significant driver of external democracy support policies, except in specific cases of direct interest to voters. Syria’s political crisis, for example, has become a domestic political issue in Turkey. The treatment of Tamils in Sri Lanka also has significant resonance for Tamils in India, making it an important issue in India’s foreign policy.

9. Rising democracies tend to prefer an approach to democracy support based on engagement, strengthening regional norms, and leading by example rather than coercive pressure. Indonesia, for example, introduced the Bali Democracy Forum as a way to share experiences with democracy in Asia and pushed the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to become a political as well as economic community. South Africa worked with the African Union to help establish the African Peer Review Mechanism. Brazil has played an important role in establishing normative standards in Latin America. Despite these commonalities, Indonesia and Turkey appear more comfortable making democracy support an explicit part of foreign policy than India, South Africa, and Brazil.

10. Engagement can be a valuable strategy, but some argue that in cases of severe human rights violations coercive international action may become acceptable and necessary. There is no consensus on when coercive action and even military intervention are justified; some suggest that regional support for intervention is a sufficient basis for legitimate action, while others urge greater respect for national sovereignty.

Perspectives on increased international collaboration on democracy support

11. Established democratic powers hope to work more closely with rising democracies on international democracy support, but rising democracies are sometimes sceptical of such cooperation. They are often suspicious of Northern intentions and double standards and wary of being pulled into a US or European foreign policy agenda. Some prefer to promote greater cooperation among rising democracies through forums such as India-Brazil-South Africa (IBSA) or ASEAN. Yet rising global actors do not adopt uniform positions on this issue. Turkey, for example, is a member of NATO and collaborates closely with its NATO allies in a number of areas.

12. Multilateral institutions dedicated to democracy such as the Community of Democracies and the UN Democracy Fund involve rising democracies and can provide some avenues for international collaboration on democracy support. But some express disappointment in their lack of operational usefulness and scepticism about the exclusive nature of the Community of Democracies and other democracy groups.

13. The United Nations could provide a more effective forum for cooperation on democracy support since it is inclusive and has international legitimacy. Yet many argue that inequalities in the structures of global governance undermine prospects for cooperation because rising global actors do not feel that UN decision-making bodies are fully representative. They point to the exclusion of rising global actors from permanent seats on the UN Security Council and the perceived selectivity in decisions of international bodies such as the UN Human Rights Council as major challenges to the legitimacy of these institutions. Others note that while global governance issues must be addressed, they should not get in the way of cooperation on democracy support.

14. Greater collaboration among democracy supporters would be valuable, but should not come at the expense of listening to the needs and priorities of recipients and letting
them drive the democratic process. Recipients of democracy support are also sceptical of the interests of donors, particularly countries that supported dictators in the past, and significant work is needed to rebuild trust.

Supporting processes of political change: The cases of Egypt and Myanmar

15. In countries where political change is already underway, international democracy supporters can play a positive role both by providing direct assistance to democratic actors and institutions and by maintaining international pressure on power holders to support democratic change. These situations provide some of the most promising opportunities for cooperation and consensus between traditional democratic powers and rising democracies.

Egypt

16. Outside actors did not play a substantial role in encouraging political change in Egypt prior to the 2011 protests and Hosni Mubarak’s regime instead benefited from significant external support, most notably from the United States. As a result, many Egyptians do not trust the US and Europe to support their democracy. Rising global actors may be viewed a bit less suspiciously since they do not have as strong a history of supporting Mubarak.

17. Egypt has experienced a political opening, but it still requires significant reforms to pave the way for democracy. In the near term, Egyptians need to draft a new constitution, a process where comparative experiences could be useful. Egypt also needs to build the basic institutions of democracy, including an effective parliament. Most Egyptian parliamentarians are new to the job, and those with experience worked in an undemocratic institution. Training programs for parliamentarians could thus be useful. More fundamentally, Egypt must deal with an authoritarian deep state which still maintains significant power in the country. This means reforming the security system to protect the people rather than the government and addressing the extensive economic and political influence of the military, as well as promoting transparency and good governance generally.

18. Rising democracies could provide valuable assistance to Egypt’s transition because they have faced similar challenges in the recent past. For example, Indonesia, Brazil, and Turkey could provide advice on dealing with the role of the military in a democracy, South Africa could share experiences with transitional justice, India could provide expertise on elections and parliaments, and Brazil could provide insight on pairing economic growth and social justice. Turkey has already begun frequent exchanges with Egypt and has established capacity building programs in the country. Indonesia has also started to engage. Other rising powers seem hesitant to do so.

19. While Egyptians might prefer to receive assistance from rising global actors, rather than from traditional donors, the latter group continue to possess the majority of democracy support resources. This could be an opening for greater cooperation between established and rising donors. The EU is already supporting a South African NGO to observe the elections in Egypt.

20. In addition to assistance programs, the international community also needs to put diplomatic pressure on Egypt’s Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) to ensure it holds free elections and hands over power to civilian authorities. Recent events, particularly the disqualification of several leading presidential candidates, have raised suspicions among many Egyptians that the deep state will act to prevent serious democratic change. Yet it is unclear if any country, including the US, has significant leverage over the SCAF.
Myanmar

21. In contrast to Egypt, Myanmar’s regime faced substantial international pressure for political reform. The US and Europe adopted a policy of tough sanctions and international condemnation, while India and Indonesia pursued engagement. In the past these differing strategies created some diplomatic tensions, with the US and Europe urging India and Indonesia to adopt a harder line. Yet many believe that the combination of isolation and engagement strategies was helpful in contributing to Myanmar’s recent political opening, though some argue that this experience shows the superiority of engagement to naming and shaming.

22. ASEAN and Indonesia appear to have played a particularly important role in encouraging political change in Myanmar. In 2005 Myanmar tried to become chair of ASEAN but was blocked because of human rights concerns, in part as a result of international pressure. This provided Indonesia and other ASEAN members an opening to discuss political reform with Myanmar’s rulers.

23. Indonesia has tried to support Myanmar’s political opening through exchange programmes both on the governmental and civil society level. It has sponsored cooperation between each country’s national human rights commissions and election commissions as well as shared Indonesia’s experience with ethnic conflict and peace building. It has also encouraged exchanges between Indonesian and Burmese think tanks, media groups, and other civil society organizations.

24. Other external actors could also play an important role in supporting democracy in Myanmar. The US and Europe are ready to help, but they come with some baggage due to their strong support for sanctions. India is of huge geostrategic importance to Myanmar and also has important lessons to share on economic and democratic development and ethnic reconciliation. South Africa is a symbol of democracy for many activists within Myanmar and its support would likely be welcomed, as would that of Turkey and Brazil.

Military intervention and post-conflict support: The cases of Libya and Afghanistan

25. The vast majority of democracy support does not involve military intervention or the “responsibility to protect” doctrine, yet the few high-profile instances where democracy and human rights objectives have accompanied military action tend to have outsized influence in shaping international perceptions of democracy promotion, especially among developing countries. These cases create special challenges for international assistance, both because of the heightened geopolitical suspicions associated with military intervention and the difficulties of post-conflict reconstruction. In these places, it is important to understand that security objectives, mass atrocity prevention, and post-conflict reconstruction are related to but not synonymous with democracy support.

Libya

26. NATO’s military intervention in Libya was highly controversial and is a continuing source of tension between most rising democracies and many established powers. Some within rising democracies feel that NATO did not allow sufficient time for efforts at dialogue with the Qaddafi regime, particularly the African Union’s mediation, to bear fruit before turning to military options. Proponents of intervention, notably France, the US, and the UK, contend that they had to intervene to prevent the imminent slaughter of civilians. Many critics also argue that the NATO mission in Libya went beyond its UN mandate to protect civilians and was insufficiently accountable to the UN; NATO should have included the non-permanent members of the Security Council in the Libya Contact Group and been required to report back to the Security Council on the progress of the mission. Advocates of non-intervention also worry that the Libyan case will be presented as a success story and used to justify military action elsewhere.
27. The Libyan intervention sparked suspicions in many developing countries that NATO and its allies, including some Arab states, were using democracy and human rights as a pretext for military action to pursue interests in Libya’s oil sector. Some contend that foreign countries are contributing to internal divisions within Libya by supporting specific militia groups to advance their economic interests. This distrust means that countries who were involved in the military intervention come with significant baggage and Libyans may see help from rising democracies as more neutral.

28. Divisions around the legitimacy and conduct of military intervention should not distract from international support to Libya’s pressing current needs, however. Libya faces severe challenges in rebuilding credible state authority, reintegrating militia groups, finding a way forward on transitional justice, promoting national reconciliation, and other issues. The US does not envision a long-term aid programme in the country but is ready to help with various democracy support concerns. Turkey has offered assistance with capacity building and technical and vocational training, and other rising democracies could also play an important role in the country if they are interested.

Afghanistan

29. International assistance to Afghanistan is particularly complicated due to the history of military intervention in the country, a difficult neighbourhood with powerful geopolitical and security interests at stake, a continuing insurgency, and serious economic problems. This makes it difficult to prioritize democracy support and may require making deals with the Taliban, which some consider unacceptable. Some argue that NATO’s early focus on achieving short term stability and narrow security interests, including support for warlords, led to insufficient attention to building sustainable security institutions and establishing the rule of law.

30. Afghanistan nevertheless has some reasons for hope, including a lack of secessionist movements and recent improvements in social indicators. It should be noted that Afghanistan is not Iraq and while Afghans want the international community to leave, they do not want an immediate end to foreign involvement in the country. On the contrary, it is argued that the role of the international community should be to encourage a peaceful political transition in 2014, for which preparations should now begin, and ensure a credible election. A long-term commitment of economic and political assistance is also needed.

31. Turkey and India are already playing a role in Afghanistan. Turkey does not have an official democracy promotion strategy in the country but it runs several provincial reconstruction teams and is involved in education and rule of law programs. Turkey is also engaged in diplomatic efforts at both a trilateral (with Pakistan) and regional level to support peace negotiations in Afghanistan. India is also providing assistance in the country, but this role is complicated by its relationship with Pakistan.

Dealing with intransigence:
The cases of Syria, Zimbabwe, and Sri Lanka

32. In addition to providing support to political openings and post-conflict situations, both established and rising democratic powers have played an important role in pressuring governments to respect the rights of their people. These cases bring up difficult questions about the relative value of engagement and coercive measures, as well as what to do when both strategies fall short.
33. Syria is an urgent test case for discussions around international options in the face of mass atrocities. Extensive efforts at engagement and agreements with the Assad regime have so far failed to stop the violence or encourage serious political reform, leading some countries to demand stronger action while others urge continued commitment to international negotiations. Opposition actors are demanding more assistance, and many feel abandoned by the international community.

34. Rising democracies made serious attempts to engage with Syria’s government in the early months of the uprising. Turkey had an extremely close relationship with the Syrian government before the crisis and engaged in intense diplomacy to push reform, but eventually grew frustrated and became one of the most aggressive opponents of the Syrian government. This change brought controversy within Turkey and Syria, with some arguing that Turkey gave up its leverage by cutting off ties and others contending that Turkey took too long to break ties and has lost legitimacy with the Syrian people. With the UN Security Council unable to agree on action, IBSA also sent a mission to Syria. It was not successful and many saw it as relatively insignificant since Turkey is a more important regional player than South Africa, Brazil, or India.

35. Negotiations through the United Nations have proven frustrating. Non-permanent members of the UN Security Council, including South Africa and India, joined established democratic powers in supporting a resolution calling for Assad to step down, but were blocked by Russia and China. More recently, the Security Council endorsed Kofi Annan’s peace plan and authorized an observer mission in the country. Some hope the Russia and China could be convinced to support a stronger resolution in the future. But civilians continue to be killed and all indications are that the Syrian government is not keeping its promises under the Annan plan. This situation is likely to spark more international divisions, with some arguing that the plan and UN diplomacy deserve more time, and others pushing for more aggressive action. Brazil is continuing to push for UN diplomacy, though its diplomats now talk about non-indifference on human rights violations, while Turkey wants more proactive measures.

36. Given the shortcomings of engagement, what other options are available to support democracy and human rights in Syria? Turkey has already taken steps to accept Syrian refugees and host Syrian opposition members, including the Free Syrian Army. Yet Turkey’s tough rhetoric on Syria and discussion of creating buffer zones has raised expectations among Syrians that it would do more than it currently has. The Syrian opposition’s main demand is arms, but most international actors are wary of supplying them because of the risks of introducing more loose weapons into a chaotic area and concerns that the Assad regime would use such support to justify continued repression. Direct military intervention is another option, but it raises even more serious concerns of inflaming the region and does not enjoy the clear support of the Syrian opposition. Some argue that the threat of military intervention is being used primarily as a rhetorical tool, by non-interventionists as an excuse to do nothing and by others as a way of signalling that all options are on the table.

37. Discussion of aggressive action in Syria is complicated by the foreign interests at stake in the country. The United States and Europe as well as Gulf countries such as Saudi Arabia and Qatar have an interest in undermining the Assad regime as a way of weakening Iran’s support to Hezbollah and Hamas. This leads some to believe that these powers are behind the uprising, and forces Syrians to justify the legitimacy of their popular uprising. Others fear Syria is being used as a proxy for disagreements between the US and Russia and between the Gulf countries and Iran. Turkey also has a strong interest in events in Syria due to its long land border and the influx of refugees, but some believe it is using democracy as a pretext to return to influence in the Middle East, where it was once an imperial power.
38. Despite these immediate challenges, Syrians also need to plan for an eventual political transition. The Syrian diaspora has already begun working on issues of constitutional reform, transitional justice, security sector reform, and other key challenges. International support in these areas could be useful, and countries should not allow geopolitical divisions to get in the way of providing assistance.

Zimbabwe

39. Zimbabwe has been a consistent source of frustration for international advocacy on democracy and human rights, and of tension between attempts at engagement and isolation. European countries and the US have pursued a policy of sanctions, while South Africa has consistently attempted to engage with the government of Robert Mugabe and before 2008 tried to block discussion of Zimbabwe at the UN. South Africa has domestic reasons to prefer engagement given its shared border with Zimbabwe and the economic consequences of political instability in a neighbouring country. But it also believes that engagement preserves South Africa’s leverage in Zimbabwe and may be more effective in the long run.

40. South Africa sees some progress in Zimbabwe since 2008. Under South African pressure, the Mugabe regime reformed its election law, giving some more room to the opposition. Mugabe also agreed to a power sharing agreement with the opposition following South African mediation of Zimbabwe’s election crisis, though sanctions may also have helped pressure him to make concessions. This agreement has created new opportunities around constitutional and election reform and contributed to a measure of stability in the country.

41. At the same time, the Global Political Agreement between the ruling ZANU-PF party and the opposition has not been fully observed and it is unclear who can ensure compliance. Mugabe and the ZANU-PF have consistently reneged on their promises. Zimbabwe also faces major challenges around the steady erosion of independent institutions, the securitization of the state, parastatal militant groups, the persistence of the deep state, and transitional justice and national reconciliation.

42. South Africa is continuing to monitor the situation in Zimbabwe on a diplomatic level, and South African NGOs have also established partnerships with NGOs in Zimbabwe. Other rising democracies have not played a major role in the country, though Brazil provided election observers. Democratic progress in Zimbabwe remains limited, but it is unclear what other options are available and many doubt that more coercive action will lead to better results.

Sri Lanka

43. Sri Lanka is a democracy and presents a significantly less extreme case than Syria or Zimbabwe, but the international community is nevertheless seriously concerned about the government’s handling of the aftermath of conflict with the Tamil Tigers. Specifically, many countries believe the Sri Lankan government has not sufficiently investigated possible violations of international humanitarian law and does not appear interested in addressing the grievances of its Tamil community. Instead, a personality driven government and majoritarian political environment have harmed reconciliation efforts.

44. India has repeatedly engaged with the Sri Lankan government in an effort to encourage it to pay more attention to the concerns of its Tamil population, in part because India is a close neighbour and has its own Tamil community. Yet the Sri Lankan government consistently reneged on commitments it made to Indian officials. India is usually reluctant to involve the United Nations in the affairs of sovereign states, particularly states in its region, and in the past has always defended Sri Lanka internationally. But India became so frustrated with the lack of progress on engagement that in March 2012 it voted for the first time in favour of a UN resolution condemning Sri Lanka, though it helped temper the resolution’s language.
45. It is unclear whether increased international pressure will encourage Sri Lanka to change its position or if it will be perceived as an affront to sovereignty and serve to harden attitudes within the country. The international community has so far applied mostly moral pressure and the UN Human Rights Council resolution condemned Sri Lanka only for failing to follow up on its own report on allegations of violations of international humanitarian law. Additional measures could be taken to pressure the government, such as threats to foreign aid, but such actions do not appear forthcoming. The UN has an Indian special representative on Sri Lanka, and there could be more efforts to strengthen this UN process.

Prospects for greater international understanding and cooperation on democracy support
Challenges to improved collaboration

46. Rising global actors and other countries in the developing world continue to be suspicious of the foreign policy intentions of established powers. Many believe democracy promotion is primarily used to advance economic or security interests and point to various instances where traditional democratic powers contribute to poor governance in developing countries. Some also see democratic rhetoric as part of an attempt to promote a hegemonic discourse.

47. Views vary about the goals of democracy support and the appropriate level of intervention in a sovereign state’s internal affairs. This is especially evident in the case of semi-authoritarian regimes, where human rights violations are not as extreme and rising democracies are often hesitant to get involved. Differences also exist around the proper emphasis which should be put on civil and political rights as opposed to economic and social rights.

48. Although established and rising democratic powers may share common objectives and an end goal, they often disagree on tactics. The former are more comfortable with coercive tactics such as sanctions and international isolation, whereas the latter generally prefer engagement. Some feel much more research is needed on the impact of these measures, and judicious use of both may be warranted.

49. Certain individuals within rising democracies are interested in making democracy support a larger part of foreign policy, but they often face opposition from their government bureaucracies. The foreign policy establishments in rising democracies are still strongly influenced by ideas of non-intervention and state sovereignty. These countries may also face more severe resource constraints than established powers and are unlikely to make democracy support a fiscal priority.

50. Both rising global actors and traditional donors still need more information on what works in democracy support and what instruments are most effective. Rising democracies do not have well established toolboxes in most areas of democracy support. The US and several European countries have considerable experience in this area, but are still trying to update, reshape and improve their methods. The US is seeking better evaluation of its democracy support programs, the UK is investing substantially in research on what works, and the EU is testing its approach in ten pilot countries.

Paths forward

51. Despite continued mistrust, there is an increasing consensus among both established powers and rising democracies that democracy needs to be an internally driven process and external actors cannot impose a particular model of democracy. There is no one size fits all. Discussions on this topic are taking place in a significantly more positive atmosphere than was possible five years ago. There is wide recognition of the importance of country ownership in both democracy and development assistance, though translating this principle into practice remains a work in progress.
52. Most democracy support work does not involve the contentious geopolitical issues of military intervention, sanctions, or other forms of coercive action. Significant room for cooperation exists in more low-profile activities such as capacity building and other support to government institutions and civil society. Collaboration can be easier if established democracies are willing to provide space and let rising democracies play the most visible role.

53. Cooperation on democracy support does not require universal consensus and can occur within small subgroups of countries. There is considerable interest in triangular cooperation between an established donor, a rising democracy, and a transition country, with the traditional donor providing some resources and expertise and the rising democracy providing its distinctive perspective. It is also possible to have minilateral cooperation, with ad hoc groups of countries working on particular issues of mutual interest.

54. The US, UK, France, and other European donors recognize they have much to learn from rising democracies and are eager to work with them. There is a need to take advantage of what each has to offer. Various efforts at cooperation are already underway, including US efforts to work with India in certain African countries and with Brazil in Mozambique, EU support for a South African NGO working in Egypt, and South African human rights forums with Norway and Sweden. Rising democracies already have some established democracy support tools, such as South Africa’s active election commission.

55. Regional bodies have also become an increasingly important mechanism for norm-setting and cooperation around democracy support, and do not require agreement with established powers. ASEAN includes political cooperation as one of its three pillars and its charter balances non-interference in internal affairs with respect for human rights. The African Peer Review Mechanism, supported by South Africa, could become a useful tool for democratic norm-setting in Africa. Brazil has also pushed to strengthen democratic norms in Latin American institutions.

56. There is also room for collaboration on international norm-setting and transnational governance issues. The Open Government Partnership is one promising example of cooperation around issues of transparency and citizen engagement between established and rising democratic powers. Brazil and the US served as the initial chairs of this effort and will pass the chairmanship to the UK and Indonesia. Countries could also work together more closely on issues of mutual interest such as transnational corruption and stolen asset recovery. Additionally, the Community of Democracies is trying to become more operational and could be another forum for greater cooperation on democracy support, as could the UN Democracy Fund. The G8’s Deauville Partnership, which was launched under a French presidency and in which Turkey takes part, could also invite participation from other rising global powers.

57. Given the emphasis on socio-economic rights among rising global actors, development assistance could serve as another entry point for cooperation. France and Brazil, for example, have successfully collaborated on a program to use a one euro tax on airline tickets to contribute to the fight against HIV/AIDS. South Africa has also joined this effort. Other countries, such as the US, provide democracy support through their development agencies and attempt to integrate work in both areas. Democratic values such as transparency and accountability, as well as support to civil society, are also being mainstreamed within development work. This can have positive effects for democracy. In Indonesia, for example, the civil society actors who received socioeconomic assistance under Suharto became strong pro-democratic forces during and after the transition. What is needed is to build on some of the very practical cooperation currently being undertaken and aim to raise this to the level of agreement on policy and principles.
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