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International Democracy Assistance for Peacebuilding Cambodia and Beyond

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I alone take full responsibility for any sins of omission and commission.

Introduction

The end of the Cold War in the early 1990s gave rise to peacebuilding activities in war-torn societies in various regions of the world. The number of interstate conflicts then continued to decline noticeably, but that of intrastate ones rose and posed a growing threat to international, national, and human security.¹

Academic literature in this field of study became a growth industry in the 1990s, even though the concept of peacebuilding had emerged long before this period. In 1966, the functionalist theorist David Mitrany used the term ‘peacebuilding’, which seems to imply that peace prevails when ‘our common society’ conquers ‘poverty’, ‘disease’, and ‘ignorance’.² Ten years later, the leading pacifist Johan Galtung, known for his concept of positive peace, employed the same term (distinct from peacemaking and peacekeeping) as a strategy to abolish structural violence.³ It took the United Nations 16 more years to popularize the concept, when the then – UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali adopted it in 1992.⁴

Peacebuilding seems to hold the greatest potential, largely because other approaches to security can only offer ‘band-aid’ solutions to deep root-causes of conflict. Throughout the 1990s, humanitarian intervention held great promise when states, particularly the United States and its NATO allies, showed their willingness to save people in strange places. The logic of international solidarity emerged. But the 2000s saw no effective humanitarian interventions; when undertaken, they proved either ineffective⁵ or controversial.⁶ Economic sanctions (including smart ones), which increased in number in the 1990s,⁷ have their limits,⁸ and have often proved counter-productive when put in the context of human security. Civilians suffered more from sanctions than their leaders. Peacekeeping does not always succeed. Even when it works, peacekeeping offers no lasting solutions to the problem of war.

By saying that peacebuilding holds the greatest potential, I do not suggest that this approach has thus far produced only success stories. Critics of peacebuilding have much to say about the limits of neo-liberal/Kantian internationalism, most notably in the area of intervention.⁹ Still, if successful, peacebuilding can best promote human, national, and international security.

The question remains: At what point does peace become consolidated or sustainable and how can we achieve this objective? Some scholars believe peace gets consolidated when warring actors within a given society develop, as Elizabeth Cousens puts it, 'the capacity to manage conflict without violence'.¹⁰ Her view rests on this premise: preventing renewed hostilities or successful conflict management requires 'effective mechanisms [social, political, and legal] by which a polity can resolve its rival claims, grievances, and competition over common resources'.¹¹ The 'elements of positive peace that hold the most promise for peacebuilding – effective public institutions, meaningful political inclusion, norms of fairness and access, legal protection for groups and individuals, and so on – are precisely those that create mechanisms for addressing grievances and resolving conflict.'¹² But for her, mechanisms for conflict management in post-war societies need not always take a liberal democratic form.

The academic literature shows no lack of criticism leveled against liberal democracy and the failure of efforts to promote it in war-torn societies. While some scholars view this type of effort as futile (having no effect on dictatorial systems), others see it as dangerous. Former Prime Minister of Singapore Goh Chok Tong once sternly warned that Western-style democracy 'could bring the country down'.¹³ The external imposition of liberal democracy on war-torn societies, others argue, can exacerbate existing violent conflicts or bring about further social and political disorder.¹⁴

But democracy from the liberal tradition underpins this study, which does not regard it as impeccable. British Prime Minister Winston Churchill's well-known point made in 1947 still rings true today: 'No one pretends that democracy is perfect or all-wise. Indeed, it has been said that democracy is the worst form of government except all those other forms that have been tried from time to time.'

Still far from perfect, liberal democracy proves itself a much better system of government than non-democratic ones; it helps promote human freedom and interests.¹⁵

Empirical studies further show that, while semi-democracy may provide some stability¹⁶ and that the autocratic models of economic

development may bring temporary successes, democracy does not necessarily impede economic development and may provide better conditions for sustainable economic development than dictatorship can.¹⁷ As Amartya Sen has pointed out: 'no substantial famine has ever occurred in any country with a democratic form of government and a relatively free press.'¹⁸ According to a study based on 138 countries over the period 1950–1990, 'democracies showed markedly lower infant mortality rates than dictatorships' and outperformed the latter 'at every level of per-capita GNP'.¹⁹ Democratization helps overcome security problems. Democracy building, for instance, can help combat the threat of transnational terrorism. As Jennifer Windsor puts it, 'Democratic institutions can help address underlying conditions that fuel extremism'.²⁰ Finally and arguably, democracies show less inclination than dictatorships toward waging war against each other.²¹

One of Bruce Russett's basic points deserves consideration here: 'the initial creation of democratic institutions may contribute to the explosion of ethnic conflicts, by providing the means of free expression, including expression of hatred and feelings of oppression.' This point, however, 'does not mean...that the solution lies in less democracy. Rather, it likely lies in devising institutions, and nurturing norms and practices, of democratic government with respect for minority rights'.²² We thus need to ask the hard question of how to build democratic institutions without exacerbating ongoing violent conflicts. Proponents of democracy still ask how new democracies in former war-torn countries can successfully build institutions that 'foster free and open competition without descending into factionalism' and that make leaders 'more willing to accept meaningful constraints on their authority'. In other words, they still seek to understand 'how to build the specific institutions that reduce the risk of violent instability in countries where democracy is being established'.²³

A more recent study, by a panel of independent scholars who analyzed the fate of democracies and dictatorships around the world between 1955 and 2002, empirically validates the relationship between democratic consolidation and institution building. Their findings show that 'political institutions and the patterns of political behavior that evolve around them determine a country's resistance to instability'. The study confirms that 'countries with the most vulnerable institutions face relative odds of near-term political crises that are higher by roughly eight to two dozen times'.²⁴

But how to build and maintain institutions successfully remains a daunting task. Institutionalists tend to ignore structural factors. In the

mid-1990s, Karen Remmer once reminded us that, ‘comparativists have all but abandoned efforts to generalize about macrosocial prerequisites for political democracy in favor of more contingent understandings emphasizing the strategic choices of political actors.’²⁵

Structural challenges to institution building matter significantly. New institutions in post-war societies remain pathetically weak or often collapse. Just because peacebuilders have the best intentions when building institutions does not mean that these institutions automatically become strong over time. We must pay close attention to the question of whether structural factors can constrain or impede institution building efforts or give rise to success or failure.²⁶

This book acknowledges that institutionalists put their hearts in the right place when engaging in designing institutions, but the question remains: How do we make them work as intended?

We may need to paraphrase the point made by both March and Olsen that ‘political democracy depends not only on economic and social conditions but also on the design of political institutions.’²⁷ In other words, democracy depends not only on the designing of institutions, but also on various structural conditions.

This book thus seeks to shed more light on structural challenges to democratic institution building, working through the interplay between institutional structure and structural challenges. Cambodia provides a useful laboratory for refining existing theoretical positions regarding democratization. Writing in 1998, both Mark Gasiorowski and Timothy Power argue that, ‘The empirical literature on consolidation that has appeared so far consists of mainly single-country case studies and comparative analyses focusing on Latin America and Southern Europe’ and that the literature has ‘its limited geographical scope.’²⁸ Valerie Bunce makes a similar argument: ‘Our understanding of recent democratization – of such issues as the origins and consolidation of new democracies – has been heavily influenced by the experiences of Latin America and Southern Europe.’²⁹ Countries in Southeast Asia deserve more academic attention, not because it remains the most unique region in the world as some scholars think, but because of its diverse political experiences.

Moreover, few countries in the world have become more aid-dependent than Cambodia. The post-war country provides an excellent example for peacebuilders: between 1992 and 2006, the international donor community spent at least US\$6 billion on the country. International assistance alone accounted for 50 per cent of its annual

national budget. Yet democracy has remained unconsolidated and may even recede towards ‘electoral dictatorship’.

The question remains: Why could international assistance not help consolidate democracy in this country?

This book seeks to answer that question in a systematic fashion. It contains five major parts with 15 chapters seeking to explain why international donors may succeed in helping put war-torn societies on the path of democratic transition and peace, but often fail to consolidate the democratic gains they make. Part I of the book develops an analytical framework. Critical of rational-choice institutionalism, this book advances a theoretical perspective called ‘complex realist institutionalism’ (CRI) to explain the limits of international democracy assistance to post-war societies. Sympathetic to, but not uncritical of, historical and normative institutionalisms, this book reveals the structural constraints and impediments that interfere with the process of democratic regime consolidation. This study uses Cambodia as the main case study for a number of reasons, as we shall see in Chapter 3. Part II only describes how Cambodia’s electoral procedural rules, the liberal norms of accountability and non-violence, and the principle of liberty still came under threat. Part III then explains why the new democratic regime in Cambodia remained largely unconsolidated, by demonstrating that the state, political, and civil society institutions did not grow strong enough to establish an effective system of checks and balances. The key institutions remained extremely weak. Part IV further shows how structural challenges (both non-material and material) constrained and impeded the country’s institutional development. Part V seeks to make sense of why international democracy assistance proved unable to remove the structural challenges to democratic regime consolidation in the country. The final conclusion draws lessons from the Cambodian and other case studies to advance CRI.

Part I

The Analytical Framework

1

Democratic Regime Consolidation and International Democracy Assistance

This chapter defines two key analytical concepts: democratic regime consolidation and international democracy assistance. It distinguishes liberal democracy from the various forms of democracy and dictatorship and points out that democratic consolidation (as part of the process of democratization) remains quite distinct from democratic transition. This study defines democratic consolidation as the process of moving further away from democratic transition and toward a mature democratic regime in which elite members of the major state, political, and civil society institutions effectively or fully comply with the electoral procedural rules, liberal principles and norms of the political game. Democratic transition as a political process does not automatically lead to democratic consolidation and may fall back toward dictatorship. This chapter defines international democracy assistance as a type of assistance provided by bilateral and multi-lateral actors for the promotion of democracy.

Democracy vs. dictatorship

Democracy and dictatorship stand at opposite ends of political development. Dictatorship represents the hardest end. It has its origins in ancient Italian cities (including Rome), where rulers – viewed as autocrats or near-despots – governed as magistrates enjoying absolute power during periods of emergency. By and large, the concept of dictatorship refers to absolute rule unrestrained by law. Dictators have tight control over state institutions, such as the military, the legislature, and the judiciary. They eliminate active opposition and justify their absolute rule with certain ideological rationalizations. No competitive multi-party elections take place. Dictators rule for indefinite periods of

time, possibly for life. Changes of government come about only when dictators die or get thrown out by revolution, *coup d'état*, war, and so on. Civil society does not exist. Dictators control the mass media.

In modern times, dictators include people who led totalitarian regimes, such as Adolf Hitler of Germany, Josef Stalin of the Soviet Union, Benito Mussolini of Italy, and Mao Zedong of China.

Throughout history dictatorship has manifested itself in various degrees and forms: monarchical, military, civilian, socialist, and electoral. There exist several examples of monarchical dictatorship, such the rule of King Louis XIV of France, who regarded himself as one with the state (*'L'état, c'est moi'*). Civilian dictatorships have existed throughout history, especially when effectively backed by armed forces, as in the case of Nazi Germany. Military dictatorships include the one in Japan prior to the end of World War II and the military junta in present-day Burma (Myanmar). A military junta consists of officers of equal political rank and drawn from the various military services. Socialist dictatorships include those based on Marxism-Leninism. Founder of modern communism, Karl Marx developed the concept of 'dictatorship of the proletariat'. The working class would take control of all productive forces with the aim of putting an end to the class struggle against capitalists. The Communist Party allows no alternative parties to compete in elections and controls society.

We can add the concept of 'electoral dictatorship' to the list. This type of dictatorship moves closer to civilian dictatorship, because it allows the existence of an electoral system, albeit one effectively controlled by one hegemonic party. Electoral competition does not exist in any meaningful way, since the hegemonic party dictates what goes on in the political arena. Civil society hardly exists; if and when it does, none of its actors shows any willingness or capacity to constrain the incumbent hegemon. Electoral dictatorship remains distinct from 'electoral democracy' often referred to by some scholars as 'electoral authoritarianism' or 'competitive authoritarianism', characterized by the domination of ruling parties in electoral competition.¹

For its part, democracy has many adjectives. In the mid-1950s, around 200 definitions of democracy existed.² Liberal democracy may continue evolving into something else, such as participatory or even socialist democracy. Socialist democracy as a post-capitalist, pro-communist system of government may sound ideal, but to study it requires only philosophical speculation and normative commitment based on a certain contempt for liberal democracy.³ We need to use an operationalizable concept.

This book defines democracy in liberal terms. It goes beyond Huntington's procedural definition, which asserts that, 'a twentieth-century political system [is considered] democratic to the extent that its most powerful collective decision makers are selected through fair, honest, and periodic elections in which candidates freely compete for votes and in which virtually all the adult population is eligible to vote.'⁴ For others, democracy contains the following elements: 'competition, participation, and civil and political liberties.'⁵ Liberal democracy does not rest upon a political system but rather on a regime encompassing these features. Renske Doorenspleet captures the meaning when stating the following: 'A liberal democracy is a regime in which there is meaningful and extensive competition, sufficiently inclusive suffrage in national elections, and a high level of civil and political liberties.'⁶ Another scholar similarly characterizes liberal democracy as 'a political system marked not only by free and fair elections, but also by the rule of law, a separation of powers, and the protection of basic liberties of speech, assembly, religion, and property.'⁷ This study defines a democratic regime as one whose elites comply with the electoral procedural rules and liberal principles and norms.

Electoral Procedural Rules: Collective decision-making procedures in liberal democracies consist of the political process that allows citizens to pursue their interests by electing representatives. Modern democracies would not function effectively without elected representatives, who do much of the real policy work. This has much to do with the idea that modern democracy also means governability.⁸

Procedures exist to govern the electoral process. Before elections, procedures include voter and party registration systems, issuing voter identification cards, as well as registering and qualifying political parties. During election days, there exist certain procedures concerning the presence of voters at the polling stations, ballot boxes, and the casting, counting, and delivering of ballots. After the election, election administrations can verify the final count, go through other mechanisms (generally known as electoral tribunals) to settle electoral disputes among political parties by way of investigation and adjudication, and certify election outcomes.

One basic procedural rule has it that multi-party elections must take place on a regular basis (repeatability), generally stipulated by democratic constitutions. Government leaders in democratic states do not seek to maintain their power by postponing elections as often as they wish or by canceling them at will. This electoral rule distinguishes liberal democracy from dictatorship, as noted earlier.

Another electoral procedural rule has to do with the idea of transparency. Before, during, and after elections, transparency subjects government officials to openness with the aim of preventing them from acting to serve their personal interests in secrecy. Citizens have access to information about what they do, such as the public policy decisions they make, the national and local budgets they pass, the taxes they collect, and the laws they adopt. Citizens do not elect their representatives in secrecy and their representatives do not make decisions in ways unknown to the electorate at large.

The other three electoral procedural rules include freeness, fairness, and representation. Freeness simply means citizens enjoy voting rights based on political equality, which excludes economic equality as generally recognized in the socialist doctrine. The liberal conception of democracy means that market forces remain seen as beneficial, rather than detrimental, to democratic existence or survival. Efforts promoting economic equality have always received skeptical treatment by liberals, who regard them as impossible to achieve and even detrimental to the principle of liberty. Political equality thus simply means the equal right to get involved in the political process. Norberto Bobbio regards democracy only as 'a regime in which all adult citizens have political rights, one in which there is universal suffrage'.⁹ The rule of fairness rejects discrimination against certain parties, especially opposition ones, and defends the need to establish and maintain a level playing field. Democratic states also adhere to the electoral rule of representation. Citizens engage in the process of selecting their representatives, who can act on their behalf and in their interests. Democratically elected governments represent voters' interests by demonstrating their responsiveness to the needs of their constituencies.

The Principle of Liberty: Liberty remains the most fundamental liberal principle.¹⁰ According to Zakaria, 'Liberty in the modern world is first and foremost the freedom of the individual from arbitrary authority which has meant, for most of history, from the brute power of the state. It implies certain basic human rights: freedom of expression, of association, and of worship, and rights of due process.'¹¹ Individual citizens enjoy legal protection from the state's arbitrary and legitimate exercise of power. According to Bobbio, 'the doctrine of the juridical limits of the power of the State' remains fundamental in liberalism.¹² Moreover, citizens enjoy economic liberties, governed by the right to private property. Other freedoms allow them to choose the religion they want to practice, the places in which they want to reside, the career they want to pursue, and the persons they wish to marry.

Liberal Norms: The most basic liberal norms in democratic societies include accountability and non-violence. The norm of democratic accountability comes under challenge when elected officials do not hold themselves accountable for their policy decisions and actions or do not hold unelected officials to account. A democratic regime exists, for instance, if the legislature at least has the power to call members of the executive branch to answer critical questions related to policy matters and take appropriate action against them if found acting against the law.

Non-violence remains the second most basic norm in modern democracies. Democracy does not mean that social groups (especially political parties) must not compete for power, but only that they reject violence as the appropriate standard of political and social behavior. While competitive, social groups or parties maintain cooperation. The rule of law underpinning the democratic norm of non-violence prevails when significant social groups under a particular democratic regime behave under constitutional and legal constraints.¹³

The liberal norm persists only when they refrain from putting out statements inciting social violence or engaging in violent activities against the democratically elected government. State and non-state actors may still seek to remove the elected government from office, but must do so peacefully, namely by not resorting to such means as violent coups or armed struggles. Socialist revolutionary forces sometimes use violence as their instrument to capture power undemocratically, with the intent to establish dictatorships. Larry Graham observes that, 'a consolidated democratic regime cannot be achieved without commitment from the military that it will not intervene in politics regardless of electoral outcomes and that it will ignore appeals to the military for assistance on their behalf.'¹⁴

Democratic regime vs. power consolidation

Transitology and consolidation in democracy studies remain distinct in the process of democratization. Transitology has its own intellectual patron, Niccolò Machiavelli, the first to become concerned with the uncertainty of transition from princely to republican regimes. However, consolidation has no such patron. Contemporary scholars interested in the question of democratization used to study democratic transition, but have in recent decades become interested in the question of democratic stability and quality.¹⁵

Democratic transition as part of the process of democratization has several features that do not necessarily or automatically transform

post-war societies into consolidated democracies. Elites in societies transitioning toward democracy comply with a limited number of electoral procedural rules, norms, and principles. Viewed this way, democratic transition does not start with only a 'founding election',¹⁶ since the early stage of democratization appears far more complex than this.

First and foremost, democratic transition begins with the departure from dictatorship. It may begin with a liberal democratic agreement based on a set of electoral procedural rules, principles, and norms to establish a democratic regime.

Second, power-contending elites must then hold the first round of relatively transparent, free, fair, and representative elections. Elections need not become truly transparent, free, fair, and representative right away, largely because compliance with these electoral rules remains matters of degree.¹⁷ In other words, a democratic transition should begin with the new political process aimed at replacing a non-democratic or dictatorial government with a democratically elected one.

Third, the electoral process must proceed with a peaceful transfer of power. The ruling party may win the first round of elections, but losing parties must accept the election outcome without engaging in any illegitimate acts, such as violent protests and demonstrations or armed revolts. If an opposition party wins, the ruling party must non-violently concede and transfer its power to the winner. This does not rule out the possibility of power-sharing in parliamentary systems, where coalition politics remains legitimate.

As we shall discuss next, consolidation must go beyond all this. One of the problems with democratic consolidation has to do with the fact that the concept seems to mean different things to different scholars. They tend to define the concept as they see fit. Some regard the concept as 'slippery' and lacking appropriate operational measures, forcing them to develop individual concepts for their work.¹⁸ Others urge their colleagues to free themselves from 'illusions about consolidation'.¹⁹

This study focuses on the process of democratization, emphasizing the process of democratic regime consolidation,²⁰ rather than democracy, as the final outcome of progression. It does not engage in research defending the argument for teleology; generally understood as an automatic or linear progression toward the ultimate endpoint of an ideal type of democracy, namely, 'consolidation is not and should not be conceived as a linear process, moving inexorably towards successful completion. Empirical reality has amply demonstrated in recent years that protractedness, stagnation, temporary reversal, and, quite often, deconsolidation are equally, if not more likely outcomes.'²¹ The process

of transformation or change – both democratic transition and consolidation – remains essentially subject to progresses and setbacks or reversals to electoral dictatorship²² or 'transitions' followed by either 'rapid deaths' through classical military coups or 'slow deaths',²³ or 'democratic erosion' over a period of time (as opposed to overthrow).²⁴ Democratic development may break down and may subsequently become reconsolidated. In short, the process of democratization can swing between democratic transition, consolidation, deconsolidation, and reconsolidation. Overall, however, we should treat democratic consolidation as open, transformative, and boundless. As Schedler puts it, 'no democracy will ever be "fully consolidated"'.²⁵

The literature on democratic consolidation has now become a growth industry and the concept has multiple meanings. Schedler identifies five of them: two negative ones (avoiding democratic breakdown and avoiding democratic erosion), a neutral one (institutionalizing democracy), and two positive ones (completing democracy and deepening democracy). Democracy gets consolidated if it can avoid a breakdown or 'rapid death' caused by violence, such as a coup, or if it can avoid a 'slow death', meaning backsliding or regression toward autocracy or dictatorship. For scholars who define democratic consolidation in positive terms, the concept either means the process of completing (reaching the goal of completing a pending transition toward democracy) or deepening (progressing toward advanced democracy). Between the two groups of definitions, there stands a neutral one: the institutionalization of democracy. From a sociological perspective, a democracy gets consolidated when actors begin to perceive the democratic game as part of the normal or natural practice. The democratic game becomes habitual or internalized. From the subsystem perspective, democracy gets consolidated when various institutions, such as branches of government (executive, legislative, and judicial bodies), political parties, and party systems, emerge and grow strong.

This study defines democratic regime consolidation as a political process of institutional transformation, in which significant elite members increasingly comply with electoral procedural rules and liberal principles and norms. It does not follow in the footsteps of those scholars who forcefully insist democratic consolidation becomes evident when all individuals or most individual citizens adhere to democratic behavioral norms or accept democracy as the 'only game in town'.²⁶ It seems too unrealistic to find most individuals behaving in accordance with such norms. More realistically, a democratic regime becomes consolidated when it 'meets all the procedural criteria of

democracy and also in which *all politically significant groups* accept established political institutions and adhere to democratic rules of the game'.²⁷ Nancy Bermeo contends that ordinary people do not overthrow democracy (they almost always choose democracy over dictatorship), but elites do. Elites include those in civilian and military leadership positions or small coalitions.²⁸

This study focuses on significant elites within the state and political and civil societies. State institutions include both democratic and non-democratic ones. Democratic state institutions include the executive branch of government and the legislature, whose members come to power through elections. Non-democratic state institutions may include the judiciary, the bureaucracy, and the security and military apparatus, whose members do not come to power by electoral means. Political society institutions include the election administration commonly evident in democratic states; political parties registered to compete in elections, and their alliances. Civil society institutions include non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the media sector, and other voluntary associations established by citizens to serve their own personal and social ends. Economic society institutions remain market-based; they include major companies and firms or corporations. The literature in democracy studies shows a trend toward this academic consensus.²⁹

From an ontological perspective, significant elites matter a great deal in regards to the exercise of political power (democratic or otherwise). In capitalist democracies, elected representatives function as members of the political elite, but not all individual representatives play an equally significant role. At the state level, leaders of the three branches of government matter. Within political society, party leaders and election administration officials also matter. Within civil society, significant elites include those actively engaged in institutional activities to monitor elections, human rights issues, and constitutional as well as legal issues.

A democratic regime remains or becomes consolidated when none of the significant elite members (especially those of the executive branch) succeeds in monopolizing power by either institutionalizing personal power or deinstitutionalizing democratic power. Institutionalizing personal power takes place when elite members expand repressive institutions, such as the security and military apparatus, to weaken other state and non-state institutions capable of checking their despotic and infrastructural power (the power to decide and to implement decisions).³⁰ In short, this study prefers to focus on the concept of democratic regime consolidation.

International democracy assistance

This study focuses on the impact of international democracy assistance on post-war societies.³¹ Carothers regards his pioneering book as 'a response to the lack of systematic study of democracy assistance. Ten years after 1989 – the starting point for much recent democracy work – it is a natural time for taking stock. I attempt in this book to draw together the essential elements of and questions about democracy aid to help define this emergent field as a field.'³² This type of assistance means 'aid specifically designed to foster a democratic opening in a non-democratic country or to further a democratic transition in a country that has experienced a democratic opening'.³³

Evidently the 1990s witnessed a rapid growth of democracy assistance. Both Krishna Kumar and Jeroen de Zeeuw further remark that, 'International donors believe – with considerable justification – that democracy offers the best change to promote peace and heal the wounds of war in post-conflict societies.'³⁴

International democracy assistance means assistance by actors – bilateral and multi-lateral – with a policy to promote democracy in other countries. External actors include states, international organizations (such as the United Nations and the European Union), and NGOs. States have now emerged as 'democracy promoters'. The United States provides only one example. The United States has a long history of foreign policy toward democracy promotion rooted in Wilsonian liberalism after World War I. More recently, Washington began a campaign of human rights under the Carter administration, actively sought to promote democracy over communism under the Reagan administration, and spent from \$100 million in 1990 to \$700 million in 2000 on programs that helped establish and strengthen such democratic institutions and processes.³⁵ The end of the Cold War further allowed Washington to seize the opportunity to develop a robust and distinctively American liberal grand strategy to promote free trade, human rights and democracy around the world.³⁶

The United States intensified the global campaign of democracy and human rights under the Clinton administration. During the election campaign in 1992, then-Governor Bill Clinton repeatedly attacked George Bush's policy toward China and Haiti. President Bush and his Secretary of State, James Baker III, started to treat democracy promotion as an indisputably important element of the United States' foreign policy. This policy orientation coincided with the global revolution or resurgence of democracy, especially after the fall of the Berlin Wall.

Allison and Beshel similarly view this time as a point of departure in US foreign policy toward other regions in the world: 'the democratic revolutions of 1989, coupled with the retreat of authoritarian regimes in Latin America and parts of Asia and Africa, have prompted a resurgence of interest throughout the U.S. government and society at large in promoting democracy.'³⁷

The main US state agents of democracy promotion included the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and other governmental and quasi-governmental organizations such as the US Information Agency, the Departments of State and Defense, the Department of Justice, the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), the Asia Foundation, and the Eurasia Foundation. In the 1990s, Washington spent more than \$500 million per year on democracy promotion around the world.

The United States, however, did not emerge as the only actor in democracy promotion. Others in the Western world have also provided assistance to promote democracy in post-war or developing countries. Thomas Carothers, for instance, observes that, 'Almost every major donor has developed democracy-related programmes, with some becoming very actively involved, such as Sweden, the Netherlands, Germany, ... Denmark, Norway, and Spain.'³⁸ Michel Fehér points out that American and Western European leaders 'proudly associated the end of the Cold War with the advent of an increasingly cohesive international community' committed to 'fostering democracy and preventing human rights violations'.³⁹

Among international organizations,⁴⁰ the UN, its international agencies, and programmes have stood at the forefront of global policy efforts to promote democracy worldwide. In 1992, the UN established an Electoral Assistance Unit under its Department of Political Affairs. In 1994, the Unit, renamed the Electoral Assistance Division, got transferred to the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations. According to Christopher Joyner, 'the UN Secretariat has assumed the impressive role of international agent for democratization'.⁴¹ Other UN bodies engaged in democracy promotion include the General Assembly, the Security Council, the United Nations Development Programmes (UNDP),⁴² the UN Commission on Human Rights (now the UN Council on Human Rights), the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund (IMF).⁴³ Regional organizations have also become actively involved in democracy promotion. They include the European Union (EU),⁴⁴ the Organization of African States (OAS), the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), and the Commonwealth Secretariat.

National and international NGOs have also acted as another set of democracy promoters. Political foundations in the United States, Canada, Germany,⁴⁵ and others, for instance, have been active in providing democracy assistance. In the United States, NGOs involved in democracy promotion include the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI), the International Republican Institute (IRI), the International Foundation for Electoral Systems, the AFL-CIO's Solidarity Center, and the Carter Center. Some consulting private firms also have an agenda of democracy promotion; they include US-based Chemonics International, Creative Associates International, and Management Systems International. Other international NGOs include Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch.

There exist various types of assistance for democracy promotion: military intervention (to restore democracy), institution building, education, economic development, and political pressure. Based on the above definition of a democratic regime, democracy assistance should not simply mean assistance for elections. As we shall see in Chapter 2, democratic consolidation depends on the high-level institutionalization of democratic power within the state and political and civil society, and the process of institutionalization further depends upon other structural factors. We may need to define democracy assistance broadly to include any assistance that covers institutional and structural factors conducive to democratic consolidation.

During the course of democracy promotion, donors 'typically direct such aid at one or more institutions or political processes from what has become a relatively set list: elections, political parties, constitutions, judiciaries, police, legislatures, local government, militaries, non-governmental civic advocacy groups, civic education organizations, trade unions, media organizations.'⁴⁶ Electoral assistance includes organization and conduct of elections, election supervision, verification, coordination and support of international observers, support for national election observers, and observation.⁴⁷

Democracy assistance also covers the drafting of liberal constitutions and other legislation, various forms of training, including civic and voter education, and election organization. Civic education promotes awareness of democratic culture through respect for political rights and civil liberties. Another form of assistance includes economic assistance to help develop economies by ensuring economic development and building a private sector integrated into the global market economy.⁴⁸ After all, scholars regard liberal democracy in capitalist terms (based on market forces). Political assistance includes

political pressure placed on elites engaged in the political process of power competition through elections.

Conclusion

This study defines democratic regime consolidation as a post-transition process whereby significant institutional elites within democracies (most notably those of the executive branch of government) behave in a way that increasingly conforms to the electoral procedural rules and liberal principles and norms. We should not simply talk about the prevention of democratic breakdowns and survival as generally understood,⁴⁹ or the presence of institutional stability or durability as such,⁵⁰ but about growing degrees of elite compliance with the established 'liberal democratic game'. This study mainly seeks to assess the impact of international democracy assistance, which remains a controversial subject. Some remain optimistic about the impact of such assistance. Pessimists argue that such assistance has no effect or even harmful effects, because it serves reasons other than democracy. In fact, it seems more appropriate to talk about the limits of international democracy assistance.

2

Institutional Structure and Structural Challenges

A certain international consensus has now emerged on liberal democracy, but the literature reveals deep disagreement on how to promote this form of government.¹ This chapter advances the proposition based on complex realist institutionalism (CRI): international democracy assistance can help consolidate democracy if donors can successfully build an effective system of institutional checks and balances between or among state, political, and civil society institutions; however, non-material and material structures often stand in the way. Structural factors pose a critical challenge to neo-institutionalism, which tends to assume that institutions significantly structure political relationships. We still live in a 'real world' where institutional design does not automatically transform dictatorship. Because of institutional weaknesses – partly constrained by certain cultural, ideological, and historical legacies – elites tend to pursue their own interests. Their socioeconomic and political positions also impede prospects for democratic regime consolidation.

State institution building

Complex realist institutionalism as a proposed theory sees the merit of state institution building. State institutionalists urge donors to build and strengthen state institutions; otherwise, democracy will not become consolidated. None of the theorists of democracy argues that the executive branch of government should become irrelevant, but insist that the chief executive must not exercise power arbitrarily, extend power over greater reaches of society, or maintain power indefinitely. Reform of the executive branch in post-war societies remains necessary.

State institutionalists have sought to design institutional constraints on the executive branch. Some of them focus on the need to promote