

For Democracy

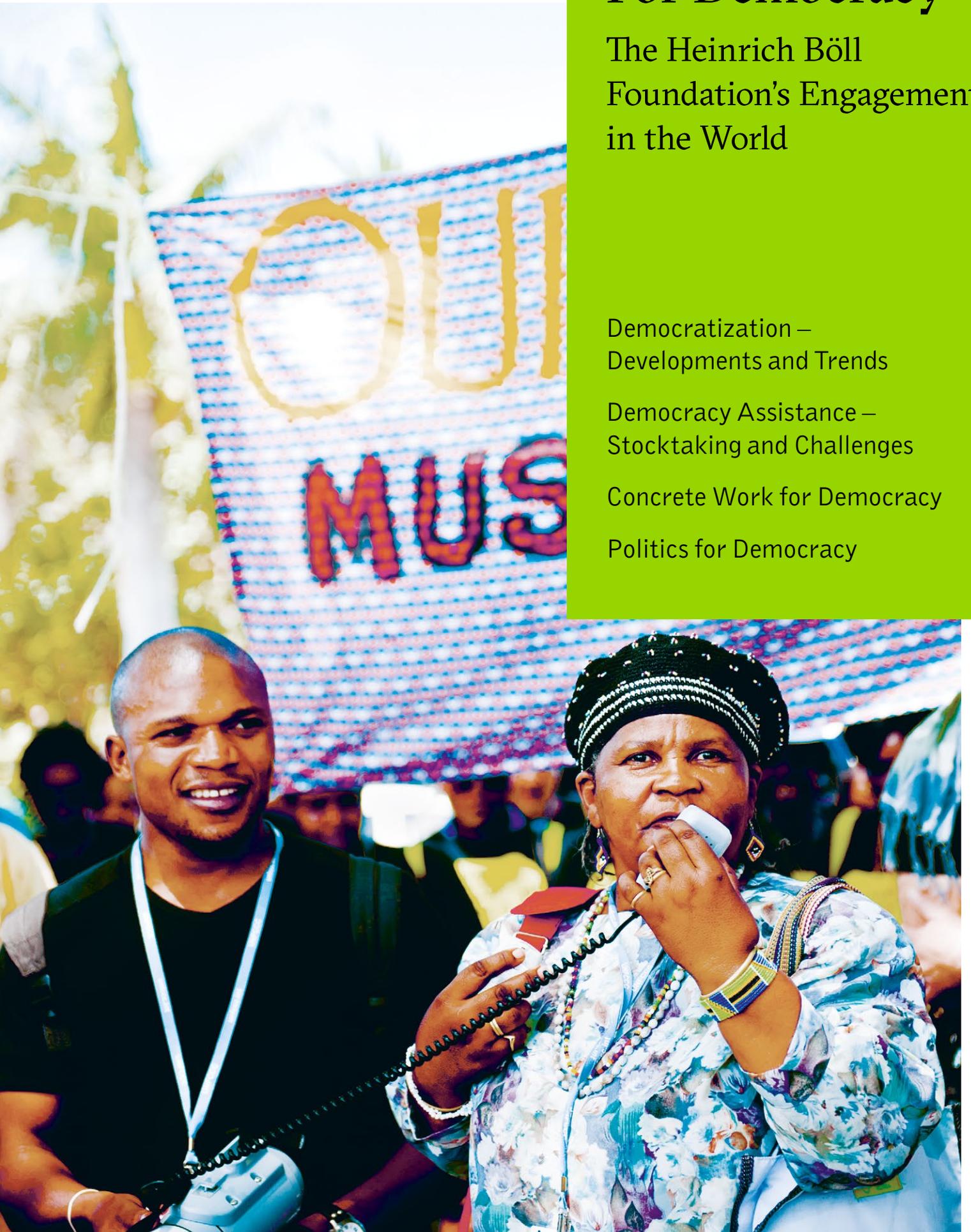
The Heinrich Böll
Foundation's Engagement
in the World

Democratization –
Developments and Trends

Democracy Assistance –
Stocktaking and Challenges

Concrete Work for Democracy

Politics for Democracy



Heinrich Böll Foundation Worldwide



Africa

- 1 Cape Town (South Africa)
- 2 Abuja (Nigeria)
- 3 Nairobi (Kenia)
- 4 Dakar (Senegal)

Asia

- 5 Bangkok (Thailand)
- 6 Kabul (Afghanistan)
- 7 Islamabad (Pakistan)
- 8 New Delhi (India)
- 9 Beijing (China)
- 10 Phnom Penh (Cambodia)
- 11 Yangon (Myanmar)

Europe

- 12 Belgrade (Serbia)
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Preface

The second half of the twentieth century was characterized by a rise in democracy as a political system. In several waves of democratization in Europe, Latin America, Africa, and Asia, autocracies and military dictatorships were overthrown and initial steps toward democracy were taken. The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the systemic change in East Central Europe, supported by civil protests, appeared to affirm this democratic upswing.

Democracy assistance soon became established as a field of political action. Over time, however, it has become clear that the transition from autocracy to democratic rule is difficult and by no means guaranteed. In many places hybrid regimes have emerged, existing in the gray zone between democracy and autocracy and proving to be quite stable. In several cases there have even been relapses into authoritarian forms of rule. Such examples cast doubt on the presumption that we are currently experiencing the triumph of liberal democracy. Especially in conflict regions and fragile states, democratization movements and democratization itself are in a difficult position.

Democracy is under pressure today in many parts of the world, even in its ostensible strongholds. The advance of populist movements and right-wing extremist parties has also entailed a loss of legitimacy for democratic institutions and parties. Economic special interests are challenging the independence of parliaments and administrations. Democratic decision-making processes are being undermined by endemic corruption, and political maneuvering room is being restricted throughout the world. Governments are increasingly taking action against civil society. Repression against opposition is on the rise.

The authoritarian developing state – as an alternative to democracy – has gained massive momentum. From Ethiopia to China, it promises stability and prosperity, albeit at the cost of freedom and the rule of law. For this reason Western democracy assistance, which started with a strong tailwind, has been struggling against a significant headwind for some time now. The United States and Europe have played no small part in this development: All too often they have disregarded their own professed values.

Democracy is not an automatic success. Democracy must be fought for, revitalized, and renewed. Whatever the different definitions, democracy always includes free and fair elections, political pluralism, the rule of law, the guarantee of human rights and basic political freedoms, separation of powers, independent media, and independent civil societies. While human rights are at times violated even in democracies, they are constitutionally flouted in autocracies. Advocating democracy and human rights is a normative imperative.

Throughout the world people are standing up for political, economic, and cultural rights. Many of these advocates of political freedom take great personal risks. Supporting democratic engagement worldwide is a core concern of the Heinrich Böll Foundation. Human rights, democracy, and ecology – this triad stands at the center of our international work.

Together with our partners we seek to expand the space for social participation and political emancipation. This requires tact, sensitivity, and a willingness to take responsibility. Progress has been made, but there have also been setbacks. We must continually re-evaluate how much room there is to maneuver – both for us and for our partners – and how far we can go without endangering them.

In the present publication, we outline and analyze the state of democracy worldwide as well as the possibilities of democracy assistance. At the same time, we provide insights into the Heinrich Böll Foundation's political work for democracy. Concrete examples and regional analyses present a vivid account of our engagement. We take stock and examine the challenges that will face us in the future.

The publication closes with a plea for democratic foreign policies that do not turn a blind eye to election fraud and blatant human rights violations in the name of alleged stability and that support critical intellectuals, independent media, and democratic groups.

The fact that this work gets done is due above all to the outstanding engagement of our colleagues at the foreign offices of the Heinrich Böll Foundation. They are the ones who cooperate with a multitude of partners to sound out democratic options and who intervene for human rights and democracy, at times facing great risks. Putting this practical work into words was also the effort of numerous foundation staff members. We would like to express our special thanks to Claudia Rolf, who was responsible for the conceptual and editorial work, and to Renate Wilke-Launer, who oversaw the publication with political sensitivity, careful attention to detail, and editorial skill. ■■■

Berlin, April 2016

Barbara Unmüßig and Ralf Fücks

Presidents of the Heinrich Böll Foundation

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1

Democratization – Developments and Trends

After the upheaval: Democracy on the defensive

April 25, 1974: Shortly after midnight the Catholic radio station Rádio Renascença in Lisbon played “Grândola, vila morena,” a banned protest song. The men of the Movement of the Armed Forces knew what they had to do. Very quickly they occupied all the strategically significant locations while the people cheered them on, celebrating the soldiers with red carnations. Portugal shed the shackles of almost fifty years of dictatorship. In everyday life the revolutionary dreams may have faded, but since then the country has been governed democratically. Barely three months later, on July 23, the colonels in Greece lay down their arms. They had controlled the country for seven years, locking up and torturing dissidents, and ultimately instigating a coup on Cyprus. The old parties resumed power.



Lasting and fleeting symbols of democracy in The Hague, Netherlands
Photo: Roel Wijnants

After the upheaval: Democracy on the defensive

On November 20, 1975, Generalissimo Francisco Franco died after having been Spain's head of state since 1939. A brutal despot, he attacked his opponents during and after the civil war, holding sway over military, church, and party to control the country with an iron grip in a quasi-fascist style. After his death Spain managed the peaceful transition to democracy, although it has yet to critically examine the aftermath of the dictatorship. Nonetheless, Southern Europe was now democratic and on its way into the European Union.

The liberating coup in Portugal was referred to by American political scientist Samuel Huntington in his 1991 book *The Third Wave* as the beginning of the third wave of democratization. In retrospect one can see it that way, but contemporaries were moved by other developments: In 1973 General Augusto Pinochet staged a coup against the elected president Salvador Allende in Chile. Other military takeovers

in Latin America followed. The outrage over the brutality of military regimes in Latin America and the role of the United States preceding and during these takeovers is part of the collective memory, not only in Latin America.

In Argentina, the murderous generals were forced to withdraw in 1982 after suffering an ignominious defeat in the war over the Falkland Islands, a war they had instigated with the aim of maintaining power by mobilizing Argentinian nationalism. The entire continent joined the Argentinians in breathing a sigh of relief at the generals' departure. By 1985, Brazil had managed to break down the military regime step by step. Meanwhile other Latin American countries succeeded in taking the first steps towards democracy. However, it was not possible to replace Pinochet in Chile until March 1990, and despite national and international efforts, he was never punished for any of the crimes committed under his re-

gime. Nevertheless the thesis of the third wave of democratization should not simply be dismissed. Precisely these transitions from military regimes to democracy in Latin America gave the wave additional force.

In *Asia* the end of the Vietnam War in 1975 brought new repression. Many Vietnamese who did not want to bow to the communist regime fled the country in small boats. In Cambodia the Khmer Rouge displaced and murdered 1.7 million people within three years. But in February 1986 a “miracle” occurred in the Philippines. More than a million people gathered on Epifanio de los Santos Avenue, known as EDSA, after Cardinal Jaime Sin spoke out on the Catholic radio station, calling for mass protests against the government. Because the citizens opposed the tanks with rosaries and pictures of the Virgin Mary, the uprising became known as the “Rosary Revolution.” Ferdinand and Imelda Marcos absconded to the United States with their jewels and two dozen wooden crates filled with cash. A short time later South Korea (1987), Taiwan (1987–88), and Thailand (1992) also transitioned to democracy. China, however, set tanks rolling against demonstrators on June 4, 1989, violently crushing protests there.

That same year, in *Eastern Europe*, the dismantling of the border fence between Austria and Hungary was followed on November 9, 1989 by the fall of the Berlin Wall; the communist regimes collapsed one after the other. In many of these countries there had in previous years been labor protests (Poland), reform demands by intellectuals (Czechoslovakia), and a regime-initiated easing of conditions (Hungary), ultimately encouraged by Gorbachev’s *glasnost and perestroika*. Even the most Stalinist of these countries, Romania, capitulated to the anger of its citizenry. The country’s communist leader Nicolae Ceaușescu and his wife Elena were executed on December 25, 1989.

The process of democratization got under way in *Africa* as well. In Benin, for example, civil society groups were organized, leading in February 1990 to a “national conference” of 448 delegates, declaring Benin to be a sovereign country. From then on, the “Marxist” general Mathieu Kérékou, who had been in office since 1972, did not have much say and was later defeated in the 1991 elections. The democratization in South Africa began with an emotional moment: Nelson Mandela was released from prison on February 11, 1990. This paved the way for negotiations between the apartheid regime and the African National Congress (ANC) liberation movement. From there one thing quickly followed another; within only a few years the continent of military regimes, one-party states, and dictatorships introduced multi-party elections. People spoke euphorically of “Africa’s second liberation.”

Democracy has gained ground on all continents. As early as 1972, the American nonprofit organization Freedom House started publishing *Freedom in the World*, keeping track of the status of democracies throughout the world. The organization, which was founded in 1941, has been reporting more democracies each year: from 39 (1974) the figure has grown to 117 (1997); the share of democracies among the total number of countries has grown from 27.5% to 61.3%. After the *annus mirabilis*, the miracle year of 1989, everything seemed possible. Francis Fukuyama was strongly criticized for his thesis – set forth before the fall of the Berlin Wall – of “the end of history,” but now it has been confirmed. The ideological opposition of the Cold War is largely a thing of the past, and communism’s insufficient performance and devastating ecological balance is obvious for all to see.

Inspired by a new faith in progress, the West has used its institutions and its money to set to work to eliminate the rubble left behind by the autocracies and to further democracy. Nonetheless, despite all the accomplishments, people in many countries are facing hard times, such as the elderly in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. They can now vote, but their lives are even more precarious than they used to be. And from Africa one might soon hear: “You cannot eat democracy.” More than a few of the new democracies also display traits of the old autocracies.

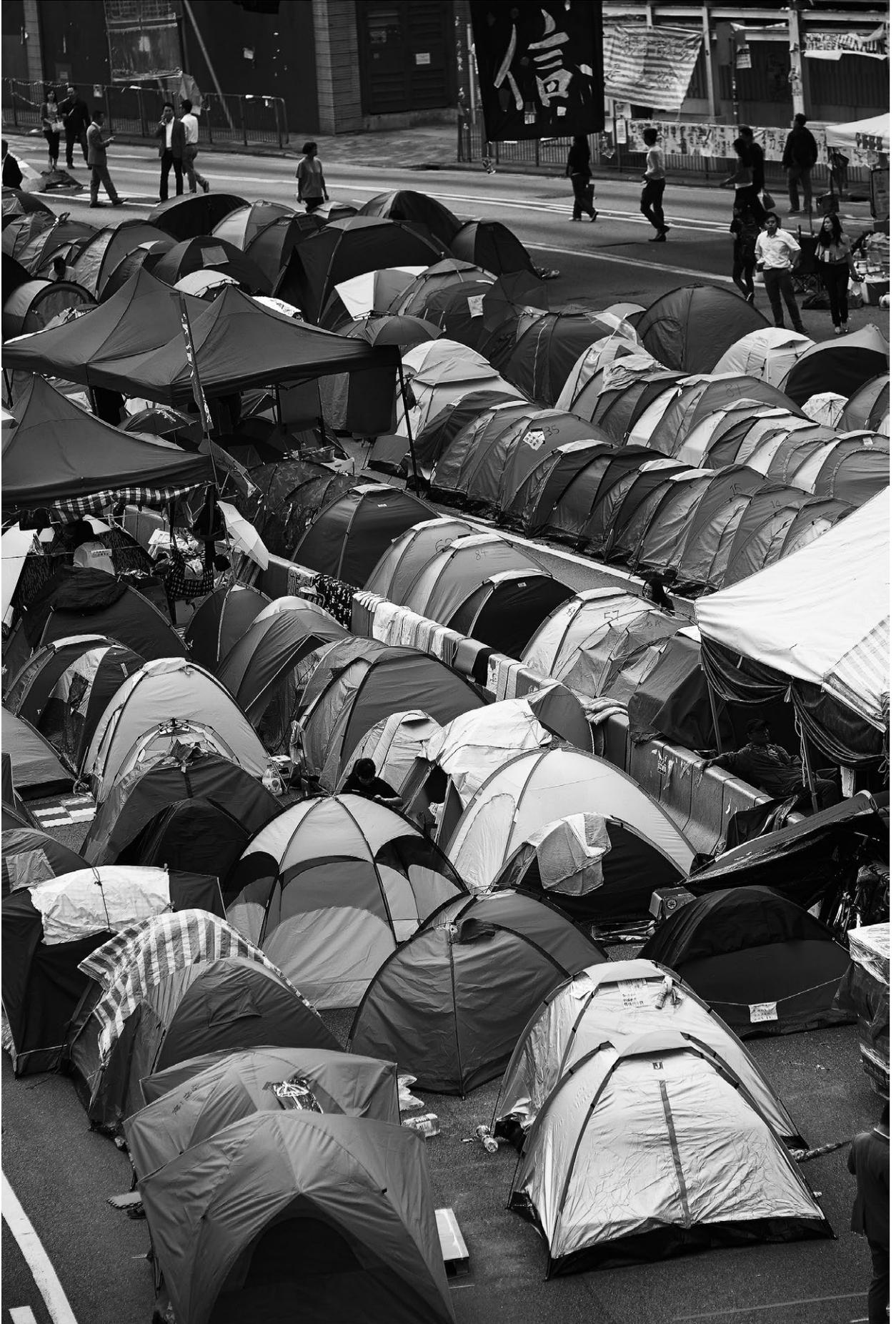
Illiberal democracies

In his now-famous essay published in *Foreign Affairs* in 1997, Fareed Zakaria pointed to an unsettling development: the growing number of “illiberal democracies.” In many cases, as is now clear, the transition from autocratic to democratic systems has stalled, whether because the previously dominant forces offer resistance, or because the prerequisites for a functioning democracy do not exist.

A number of different adjectives are used to describe these hybrid systems of rule in the gray zone between democracy and autocracy. Freedom House keeps a count of “electoral democracies,” in which voters can choose among several political parties and the voting takes place – more or less – freely. Only the countries also classified as “free” are considered “liberal democracies.” In so-called “defective democracies” (see Wolfgang Merkel and others), access to power is distributed via elections, but other aspects of government function in ways that run contrary to the principles of freedom, equality, and control. “Façade democracies” are ones that do not even have the procedural minimum of an electoral democracy; they are thus a form of authoritarian rule.

It is possible for democratic elements to coexist with authoritarian structures, as is apparent in *Sub-Saharan Africa*, the gray zone par excellence. Elections and constitutional norms are accepted,

After the upheaval: Democracy on the defensive



A base camp of protest in Hong Kong Photo: yukikei

- ▶ free media and a civil society have been established, and pro-democratic conventions and protocols have been adopted on the continent. However, many of the “sins” from the early years of independence still exist: the centralist state with an all-powerful “big man” (sometimes now also a woman) at the top, who has access to the state coffers, allows patronage to thrive, and rules over and is supported by a system of clientelism. Where parliaments are elected, they function within this framework, but policies continue to be made in the presidential palace, and controls over the executive are very limited. The judiciary is often not in a position to or is not interested in countering the arbitrariness of the ruler. In the continuum between autocracy and democracy, many countries are closer to autocracy. Rulers have learned how to steer formal democracies in their favor. They want one thing more than anything else: to stay in power and control the purse strings, preferably forever.

The fact that presidents are seldom voted out of office makes restrictions on the presidential mandate so important and at the same time so controversial. In thirty-four African constitutions there are now restrictions limiting presidents to two terms. When the issue actually arises, however, the incumbents find ways to stay in office, such as in 2015 in Burundi, despite massive protests, and in Rwanda, where an orderly democratic procedure was staged in such a way that President Paul Kagame simply could not “disappoint” the wishes of his compatriots. In only a handful of African countries have public protests been able to prevent the extension of a term of office.

The assumption that the crisis of authoritarian regimes would lead to the real introduction of democracy did not prove to be true. Not only were there setbacks involving the return to autocracy, but the hybrid regimes also proved to be permanent – or sometimes fluctuating, but fairly stable nonetheless. The coexistence of democratic processes and informal power centers has proved detrimental to democracy, because it sows mistrust, weakens democratic institutions, and does not even permit the participation of minorities in the first place, which is important for a democratic polity.

In *Asia* the political liberalization over the past twenty years has made only limited progress (e.g., in Myanmar); some of the countries have experienced setbacks (e.g., the Philippines) or relapses (e.g., Thailand and Pakistan). In Bangladesh, two women – alternating as president and leader of the opposition – have been engaged in a bitter power struggle for decades. A majority of the countries exist within a gray zone between dictatorship and defective democracy. There are very few that are either clearly authoritarian or democratic under the rule of law. Four countries have a communist one-party regime (China, North Korea, Laos, and Vietnam) and three are consolidating democracies (Taiwan, South Korea,

and India). Attempts to create democracies in the shadows of the foreign troops following military interventions have proved extremely unstable (e.g., Afghanistan) or have failed (in the Arab world and with an eye toward Iraq).

Latin America, with the exception of Cuba, is at least in formal terms a democratically ruled continent. However, many countries exhibit democracy deficits or even authoritarian structures. In Mexico, where the transition took place rather late, the democracy is jeopardized by organized crime and the use of military force in fighting it. Some countries (e.g., Uruguay and Costa Rica) have consolidated their democracies, while in others (Bolivia, Ecuador, and Venezuela), the populist personalization of politics has strengthened the power of the executive. The presidents of these three countries have mobilized the state for their own programs to benefit previously excluded segments of the population and have engaged in “other” forms of democratic participation. They accept the fact that this will polarize their societies. Civil rights, orderly procedures, and horizontal accountability (checks and balances) are secondary. Strongly personalized rule is a particular kind of defect. In such a “delegative democracy” (Guillermo O’Donnell) a person is elected who can largely rule as he or she sees fit. This type of democratically legitimated rule by a *caudillo* (or in the case of Christina Kirchner in Argentina: a *caudilla*) is also practiced elsewhere. This is how Vladimir Putin directs his “guided (or ‘managed’) democracy” in Russia. And even consolidated democracies can have a chief of state who acts like a *caudillo*, as in Italy, where Silvio Berlusconi served four terms as prime minister.

The liberal democracies of *Europe* have lost some of their appeal abroad and even their approval among their own citizens. Voter turnout has decreased moderately in Western Europe and significantly in Eastern Europe, and fewer and fewer people join political parties. The once large mainstream parties hardly represent particular groups or convictions, but are developing into demographically driven catch-all institutions. The erosion of identification and opposition has led to a general disenchantment with parties and politics.

Colin Crouch spoke in 2004 of “conditions of a post-democracy” in view of the loss of representativeness and democratic substance: The institutions of parliamentary democracy are still intact, even if electoral campaigns are becoming spectacles managed by spin doctors. Public participation (= input) doesn’t even matter anymore; what counts are the results (= output). According to Crouch, a gap emerges between the citizens and the politicians, who govern with consultants and bodies of experts and let themselves be influenced by powerful and well-organized interest groups. The financial and economic crisis in 2008 increased doubts about the capacity of politicians to act and to shape the course of events. If the

voters feel they have no real alternative, all that remains is to submit to the ostensibly inevitable state of affairs.

This gap between “the people” and elites promotes the emergence of populist parties, which exist throughout *Western Europe*, from wealthy *Scandinavia* to crisis-stricken *Southern Europe*. They have been remarkably successful in election campaigns in a number of countries. These parties can be understood only to a limited extent using concepts of the twentieth century (“left,” “right”), even if some of them express traditionally left-wing (against austerity politics) or right-wing (against immigration, Islam, and equal treatment of homosexuals) issues. Almost all populists rail against “Europe” and the accompanying loss of national sovereignty. The extent to which these reservations are shared was revealed in the European Parliament elections – of all places – in May 2014: the Independence Party (UKIP) was the strongest party in the United Kingdom, as was the National Front in France.

In Hungary, Fidesz, the national conservative government party, won the election. It has governed the country since 2010 and took rigorous advantage of its two-thirds majority in order to continue to amend the playing rules of democracy to its advantage, without much debate or consultation with other parties. The authority of the constitutional court has been reduced, and press and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) are being massively pressured in various ways. In a speech in the summer of 2014, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán openly questioned the competitive ability of democratic systems and even declared his interest in building up an “illiberal state.”

Democracy under pressure

Freedom House has lamented every year since 2006 that the number of democracies is no longer growing and that more countries are experiencing declines in freedom than increases. This “democratic recession” has been a subject of concern addressed in many commentaries. Less pessimistic observers argue that the statistical changes have been relatively moderate and have taken place in the gray zone of hybrid regimes.

What has clearly changed, however, are the actions of a small number of important authoritarian countries that are again clamping down more strongly domestically (e.g., Egypt, Russia, and China): Freedom House refers to the “return of the iron fist.” These countries explicitly refuse to accept such external criticism. Consequently, smaller countries also feel encouraged to ignore critique and crack down on critics within the country. They learn

from one another how to “manage” elections, co-opt rivals, control or buy the media, and harass civil society. The unsettling trend of massive restrictions being placed on the activities of civil society activists is also a clear sign that democracy is under pressure. ¶

In *Eurasia* a particular form of rule has become manifest, which John Keane refers to as a “new despotism.” These countries have neither defective, delegative, nor illiberal democracies, nor are they autocracies. Instead, they are a very modern variant of a very old form of rule. Down to the last detail these countries are organized completely and deliberately top-down, employing clientelistic networks and the systematic exploitation of the media. They skillfully make use of democratic elements, but have virtually everything under control. They rule by law, but organized lawlessness prevails. They expect willing subordination in exchange for goods, glamor, and history.

Peter Pomerantsev uses Russia as an example to describe what is going on: “In the 20th century the democratic capitalism of the West had a powerful answer to Soviet totalitarianism: free markets, free culture, and free politics. Mercedes, merchant banking, rock ‘n’ roll, and parliament were a more attractive proposition than Ladas, the Five Year Plan, the Red Army Choir, and the Politburo. But today’s neo-authoritarians are offering a new deal; you can have the trappings of a Western lifestyle – all the German cars, reality shows, Naomi Campbells, and blue-chip shares you desire – while having none of the political freedoms of the West, and indeed despising the West.” That is not only a message to their own people; it is also a signal to the liberal-democratic West.

After the third wave of democratization, democracy today is on the defensive. Democrats all over the world are under pressure. But citizens continue to gather to protest every day somewhere in the world, in democracies and under authoritarian regimes alike. They are fighting for their rights, against discrimination, and for change. Many institutions and organizations, both state-run and civil society-based, are standing up for democratic values. They show that there are ways out of this defensive stance – ways that must be sought and found. ■■■

¶ Notice

See essay by Barbara Unmüßig
on page 39



Tahrir Square in Cairo, July 2011 Photo: Ahmed Abd El-Fatah

Protest: The politics of squares

Protest: The politics of squares

The countries are different, and the causes are different – nevertheless, a new form of protest has arisen in them, bringing together young, well qualified people to express great unease and demand reforms.

Citizens in Armenia protested the raising of electricity prices in June 2015 (#ElectricYerevan); in Bulgaria the protests in 2013 were initially against electricity prices, but months later they became more comprehensive, lasting several weeks, against the mafia-like system (#DANSwithme). In 2015 citizens in Burundi did not want to accept the fact that an African president yet again disregarded the constitution, attempting to serve a third term (e.g., #Sindumuja). In Chile, where for years students had been fighting the privatized, and thus expensive, system of higher education, more than 100,000 people hit the streets in 2015 to protest the insufficient reform proposals. In Hong Kong, the Umbrella Movement blocked the city center for months in 2014, demanding the right to be able to vote for more than just a single, hand-picked, compliant candidate (#occupycentral). And on the Maidan in Kiev, many Ukrainians withstood extreme cold in the winter of 2013–14 in order to say “yes” to a Western Europe that had shown little interest in their situation up to then (#Euromaidan). Students in Venezuela mobilized against their country’s decline in February 2014 (#SOSVenezuela).

“People from all different contexts gather together on the squares. ... These people might have taken the stage perhaps only for a moment, but that moment has been engraved on the square and on the collective memory.”

Because protesters often gathered in prominent public squares, some of them setting up camp there, this form of expressing disapproval has been called the “politics of squares.” It is distinguished from earlier familiar marches and rallies, in which prepared banners were displayed and slogans were chanted, and also from the diverse appearances in past years of groups championing specific, often identity-related issues. In contrast, these new protests involve a massive ad-hoc gathering of individuals on public squares.

As different as the countries are, and as different as the reasons for the protests, it is possible to recognize a common profile in these new protest forms. Participants are largely members of the middle class, many of them young and well-educated people who have lost most of their trust in the powers that be, who feel very distant from political parties and politicians, and who no longer believe that elections can bring fundamental change.

In his essay “From Politics to Protest,” political scientist Ivan Krastev writes: “Protesting empowers and voting frustrates because capturing the government no longer guarantees that things will change.” People from all different contexts gather together on the squares. “The Gezi movement,” according to Turkish sociologist Nilüfer Göle, “has united people in a square and around a tree against the polarizing policies and rhetoric of the ruling party. It has brought together people, ideas, lifestyles and clubs that are hard to get to come together, including young and old people, students and bureaucrats, feminists and housewives, Muslims and leftists, Kurds and Alevis, Kemalists and communists, Fenerbahçe and Beşiktaş supporters. These people might have taken the stage perhaps only for a moment, but that moment has been engraved on the square and on the collective memory.”

The rulers have been caught off guard by so many “unorganized” people coming together so quickly. The Brazilian government was suddenly faced with three million dissatisfied citizens in 2013 in the lead-up to the soccer World Cup; instead of single-use megaprojects, the protesters wanted decent schools, functioning hospitals, and affordable public transportation.

The mobilization of so many people in no time at all succeeds especially through social media. If someone takes the initiative, there are enough people who feel similarly provoked to join them; other citizens consequently follow suit, especially if roused to anger by police brutality against the protesters. In countries where the mood is more subdued (Armenia, Bulgaria), the demonstrators discover with surprise how

many of their compatriots take to the streets with them, and that their country has something like a veritable civil society and not just small isolated groups. Hashtags, tweets, and blogs allow local and national protests to be followed globally – and to be emulated.

Occupying a public square visibly questions the power of a government and its organs of law and order. The citizens protest precisely at sites that serve as a symbol of dominance and prestige. A public “no” expressed on such squares becomes ingrained in the public memory and is connected with a loss of face. And this happens within seconds throughout the entire world.

At the same time, occupied squares demonstrate how the protesters are able to organize themselves, how they arrange electricity for their smart phones, how they keep the square clean, and how they provide themselves with food. In short: how they can create a peaceful everyday environment together with strangers. And in the open air. It is hard to denounce such a shared experience as “threatening” or a “conspiracy.” What people talk about in discussion forums, how group decisions are made – these are often lessons in direct democracy, even if not every dissatisfied person on a public square is a peace-loving democrat.

The square often becomes a stage for art and culture: Piano was played on the Maidan, and the barricades were rocking. On Taksim Square in Istanbul, people danced the tango wearing gas masks. In the absence of visible state power, a party atmosphere develops. Rage and joy exist side by side during the occupation of these squares. Attacks by the authorities are countered with wit: The Gezi Park demonstrators planted a garden, including pepper plants – as a response to the police’s massive use of pepper spray. In Sofia someone answered the insinuation that they were being paid to participate by saying: “I am not getting paid. My hatred of you comes free of charge.” Nevertheless, forms of cooptation do occasionally occur as well: regimes organize “counter-protests” and demonstrations that serve no democratic cause.

The protesters know what they are against. They reject “corruption” and “neoliberalism,” but they rarely express what they actually want in any detail. The protests are focused on the present, but beyond the immediate goals there is often no program, no coherent agenda. The gathering usually has very few recognizable leaders, if any at all. The protesters say “enough is enough” (sometimes until the government steps down or is replaced), but then usually withdraw rather quickly. Revolution or arduous reforms are not their thing. They have therefore been called “rebels without a cause.” The protesters want to be heard and demand respect. They do signalize the direction they want change to take (toward a state with due process of law and a new social contract), but then most of them return to their Internet-ori-

ented activism. That a group such as Reanimation Package of Reforms can form in Ukraine, prepare reforms, mobilize others for their cause, and that some of them even run for parliamentary office shows that there are exceptions to this. But the nonbinding nature of these gatherings, which is initially a strength of this form of protest, becomes a weakness when those involved want to transform the spontaneous impulse into politics. Consequently, even protests

“The square often becomes a stage for art and culture: Piano was played on the Maidan, and the barricades were rocking. On Taksim Square in Istanbul, people danced the tango wearing gas masks. In the absence of visible state power, a party atmosphere develops.”

with a spectacular echo, such as those against the high cost of living in Israel (2011), have quickly fizzled out. “They want change but have no clear ideas about what it should look like; they are brilliant in inventing political gestures, but weak in applied politics,” says Bulgarian Ivan Krastev about his compatriots. After the wave of protest, the mood there became even more desperate and mistrustful than it had been before. ■■

Reanimation by reform: In the Ukraine 200 activists pressure the parliament and government to take a reform course

Democracy in the Ukraine was always just a façade. There were many dramas about elections, but ultimately nothing changed: “The administrative structures have remained the same. ... Our present oligarchies and political leaders held high offices during Soviet times. They just changed their garb,” writes Ukrainian poet and essayist Andriy Lyubka in *Maidan! Ukraine, Europa*, a book that was published with the support of the Heinrich Böll Foundation.

Because even the Orange Revolution of 2004 failed to change anything, the people’s lack of trust has become so deep that it could only be regained if the state were founded again from scratch. But how can the desire for change and the drive for reform that was declared on the Maidan be maintained and channeled? The Kiev office of the Heinrich Böll Foundation sees the search for an answer to this question as one of its main tasks.

The ambitious attempt to take on this challenge comes largely from young, well-educated, and socially active Ukrainians. They know that they should not leave the matter up to politicians and have formed a coalition called Reanimation Package of Reforms (RPR). The network has already grown to more than 200 members participating in twenty working groups, first and foremost on legislative initiatives. The ineffective Orange Revolution taught them that merely replacing politicians does not change anything. For this reason they are attempting to alter the rules by which the game is played. Their draft bills are then passed on to a nonpartisan parliamentary working group (“Reform Platform”), whose members promote the bill in their respective parliamentary parties. RPR activists meet with the parliamentary president, the head of the parliamentary party, and the leaders of the committees at the beginning of every plenary week. A second, smaller base of their activities is the Centre of Support for Reform, in which RPR members and representatives of the various government ministries work together.

RPR proudly points out that forty-seven of their legislative bills or amendments have been passed in the Verkhovna Rada, the Ukrainian parliament. Other bills, however, have failed, at least for the time being. Some RPR experts and activists ventured to take the step of entering politics themselves and ran as candidates in the parliamentary elections in October 2014. They were elected to parliament through the lists of various parties of the government coalition. Hanna Hopko, a former spokeswoman for RPR, ran as the top candidate of the newly founded Samopomich (“Self-help”) party. But even the new

parliament is by no means made up solely of reform-oriented representatives. Instead, many members of parliament continue to pursue their private interests. It is a Herculean task to initiate the steps of reform toward a separation of powers, the rule of law, and democratic political processes. But a critical mass of progressive representatives, the desired “new faces,” as mentioned so often during the Maidan protests, is now working for more open debate and greater transparency in parliament.

With their method – a mixture of negotiating, lobbying, campaigns, events, and publications – the RPR activists have already been remarkably successful. They know that these are just the initial steps and that they will need a lot of patience and stamina. “Just don’t fall asleep again. Don’t take any steps backward,” advised their friends in other countries, as Oksana Nechyporenko, one of the coordinators, recalled at an event of the Heinrich Böll Foundation in Berlin. In order to convince people in other regions to join this capital city project, RPR reformers have undertaken trips to the countryside and organized hearings. They are absolutely convinced that the disruptive forces tearing the Ukraine apart will weaken once something changes: “Reform is what unites a country.”

Unburdened by the experiences of the Soviet period, with the self-confidence of professional expertise, and with reports from reformers in other countries, the RPR activists skillfully negotiate the difficult terrain. They know that they have to make the most of the present power vacuum. In contrast to the situation in Georgia after the Rose Revolution, the civil servants here were not replaced, and the activists seek to establish stability in the country by working with the oligarchs. “We are trying to direct their influence in support of the country,” says Oksana Nechyporenko, “although we know that they stand for the system that we have to leave behind us.” Her energetic colleague Hanna Hopko, who could not come to Berlin because of a visa problem, puts it succinctly:

“I have no illusions. The oligarchs have stolen money from the state coffers for twenty-three years. Although they now present themselves as patriots, they are the toughest problem of all.” ■■

New regime with the old elites: Contradictions in the transformation in Eastern and Southeastern Europe

The implosion of the communist dictatorships in Eastern and Southeastern Europe facilitated free elections there and awakened hopes for a better standard of living. However, in most of the countries the old elites know how to manipulate the state for their own interests: social participation and a focus on the public welfare have hardly been able to develop.



With an exclamation point: Kosovo in 2013 Photo: Marco Fieber

In almost all states that emerged from the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, the concept of politics and political engagement has remained a foreign, discredited, and potentially dangerous sphere of activity. This traces back to the deep chasm in real socialist states between public power – embodied by a nomenklatura that controlled all areas of society – on the one hand, and the private sphere – the family and circles of friends into which people withdrew to escape public scrutiny – on the other. “Common good,” “solidarity,” and “public” were controlled not by the people but by the powers that be, and thus closed off to individual initiatives, activism, and voluntary cooperation.

Another dimension of this was the great social taboo that existed with respect to any open discussion of the history of one’s own country or of war, repression, and exile. This taboo of course pertained in particular to the unfathomable dimensions of the Stalinist repressions in the Soviet Union. And it continues even today to impede developments toward democracy and a constitutional state in the western Balkans, where the belligerent nationalism of the 1990s has retreated into the private, familial realm, and into opposition to any and all deviations from the national normalcy. Critical social and political debate about the war crimes of these years and the genocide in Srebrenica fails even today due to nationalistic, black-and-white thinking.

Essential elements of this negative concept of politics, public welfare, and social responsibility remained, even after the collapse of the real socialist systems, and were even reinforced through the criminal privatization – in essence the semi-legal theft – of formerly state-owned property by members of the political elites. In many countries in the region, lasting regimes have established themselves under the banner of “democratic transformation,” fusing political and economic power and exploiting their societies through massive power apparatuses, authoritarian party structures, and a politically instrumentalized public sector. In this way they generate a dramatic deficiency in individual initiative, independence, and social trust – the very foundations needed for cooperative action oriented toward the common good. In most countries the old elites remained powerful and until today there has been no public debate on values that could lead to a new fundamental consensus on democracy in the largely traditionalist and conservative societies.

In Russia, the democratic reform process that got off the ground after the collapse of the Soviet Union slowed down, stopped, and reversed after scarcely a decade. In 2000, a young, radical president took power: Vladimir Putin. He was depicted as the only possible choice, the only leader who could lift the country out of the “chaos of the lost 1990s” and “raise it from its knees.” The new president consol-

idated the state and renewed the traditional power vertical. “Stability” was his main message, which continues to have a profound impact penetrating deep into society.

In fact, however, the birth of a modern Russian democracy in the early 1990s had been traumatic for much of the middle and lower classes: It went hand in hand with the plundering of the public property of the former Soviet Union and the impoverishment of many people. The state could not sufficiently fulfill its original responsibilities: providing health care and modern educational opportunities, and protecting the population against crime.

In the resulting atmosphere of disillusionment, Putin concluded a social contract with the population that promised calm and prosperity if they refrained from any intervention in the sphere of politics and power. The economic boom of the 2000s, financed with oil and gas revenues, provided the necessary resources. A society of free consumers emerged in Russia, but it was not a civil society. Ever since then political power has moved in one direction only, from the top down. Those in power view society as an object for them to control and shape with little risk of triggering far-reaching protests, because even today the Soviet mindset continues to prevail among a large segment of the population. This includes a belief in a dominant central power, a willingness to live financially dependent on the state, widespread political apathy, and a longing for national greatness as a global superpower.

“ The governing elites, which rejected the reforms demanded by the EU in the areas of rule of law and democracy, nevertheless see no alternative to integration into the European Union. ”

In the power vertical that Putin reestablished, the parties, the parliament, the regional administrations, and the electronic media were each assigned their own place. A few critical editorial offices are still able to work relatively freely, as long as they remain in informational niches and do not seek any large-scale impact. Still, the power system has come under pressure since 2010. The largely state-dominated economic model generates only minimal growth even when oil prices are high and is incapable of innovative self-renewal; the crisis that is clearly emerging has increasingly caused Putin’s “social contract” to be questioned.

The most obvious expression of this was the wave of protests in 2011–12 that followed Putin’s return to the presidency. Since then, independent civil society has been targeted and attacked – through restrictions of freedom of assembly, various tax-law chicaneries, and especially the “foreign agent law,” which has been applied very often starting in 2013,

with the justice ministry declaring nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to be “foreign agents,” virtually destroying their ability to act. It has become dangerous to engage in social activism for human rights, for citizen participation in political decision-making, for environmental protection, for gender equality or for the rights of sexual minorities. Anyone who today thinks outside of the prescribed mainstream in politics or civil society usually seeks a personal strategy of hibernation: adapting, keeping out of the line of fire, emigrating.

Developments in Ukraine and Georgia are clearly more heterogeneous than those in Russia. These two countries were caught in a downward spiral of criminal privatization, corruption, and political chaos. Georgia was also entangled in civil war and nationalist secession conflicts. In both countries, however, no authoritarian, centralized power vertical could become established in the long term. The resources were distributed too heterogeneously among various oligarchs, clans, regions, and interest groups. Such pluralism offers opportunities for an independent, self-confident urban civil society to develop, one that continually stands up to the presumptions of authoritarian and corrupt rule. What began in Georgia with the so-called Rose Revolution in 2003 continued in Kiev in 2004, and in the social revolt that in 2012 brought the defeat of the increasingly authoritarian regime of Georgian president Mikheil Saakashvili, and finally in the persistent protests on the Maidan against the regime of Viktor Yanukovich in 2013–14. The Russian annexation of Crimea and the war triggered by Russia in eastern Ukraine should also be understood as the reaction of a certain post-Soviet system of rule to the threat posed by democracy movements.

Successful protests to authoritarian rule, however, do not lead directly to democracy. Under very difficult economic and foreign policy conditions, Ukraine and Georgia today face the task of establishing stable institutions under the rule of law, as well as transparent, democratic processes. And they have to do so within societies that lack trust in democratic politics. These countries are still a long way from being immune to a relapse into authoritarian structures.

Developments in the western Balkans – Serbia, Montenegro, Kosovo, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Macedonia – have been significantly shaped by the geographical proximity of Yugoslavia’s successor states to the European Union and by the EU’s enlargement policies. In 2004 ten Central and Eastern European post-socialist countries were accepted into the EU, under the banner of European unification and historical justice. A shift of thinking, however, emerged with regard to the economically weaker countries of Southeastern Europe: The older member states imposed restrictions on free movement and the right of residence in order to protect their labor markets and prevent overexploitation of their national social



Statue of Bill Clinton in Pristina, Kosovo Photo: Marco Fieber

welfare systems. The once brilliant idea of European unification gave way to the more technical term of “enlargement.” Accordingly, the countries of the western Balkans are very doubtful as to whether the European Union even wants to have them.

The governing elites, which rejected the reforms demanded by the EU in the areas of rule of law and democracy, nevertheless see no alternative to integration into the European Union. Having completely plundered their countries economically and now surrounded (since the most recent enlargement round) entirely by EU countries and the European market, they view membership in the EU as their only option for financial support and new capital. Due to the lack of will for true political reforms, however, the process of rapprochement with the European Union has already taken fifteen years. During this time, the elites have developed a specific “transitology,” with which they present any examples of liberalization that run contrary to the dominant authoritarian and paternalistic mentality and aggressive nationalism as EU coercion – demands to which their countries must submit if they are to hope for later acceptance. An example of this are the Gay Pride parades, in which people who do not fit into the publicly prescribed heteronormativity demand visibility and their right to be different.

On the other hand, the civil society of the western Balkan States continues to have high expectations for the process of EU integration. It hopes that the combination of pressure from outside (EU) and from

below (civil society) is enough to avoid any elite-directed pseudo-reforms and instead implement real political, institutional, and economic changes in the course of the integration, accompanied by a broad public discourse on reform. This requires significant time and support. Even if countries that are already negotiating or preparing for accession into the European Union are rapidly composing action plans for adopting the 50,000 pages of EU legal regulations and their parliaments are passing new legislation in assembly-line fashion, the western Balkans still have a long way to go to become democracies in which democrats argue about the public welfare. ■■

“A danger to the state”:
Gender democracy in the country
of “traditional Russian values”

The Center for Gender Studies in Samara, a city along the Volga, was one of the first addresses in the Russian gender cosmos (unfortunately the past tense is appropriate here, but its director Ludmila Popkova is fortunately still one of the most distinguished Russian feminists.) Why *was*? Since 2012 the so-called NGO “foreign agent” law has been in force in Russia. Russian nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) that receive funding from abroad and, as stated in the law, engage in “political activities” must register themselves as “foreign agents.” Because no one would do that voluntarily, the ministry of justice can also unilaterally declare NGOs to be “foreign agents.”

No one hides their funding from abroad. The special talent of the authorities is discovering “political activity.” They find it everywhere. The Human Rights Resource Center in St. Petersburg conducted a study that compiled a list of more than seventy reasons why something can be considered political activity. What they all share is a large dose of absurdity. In a nutshell, they can be reduced to this common denominator: The public is political. Therefore, all NGOs reviewed by the authorities are “politically active”; they need only to be sufficiently independent and deal with “problematic issues.” In addition to all matters concerning gender relations (here especially LGBTI issues, of course), this also includes human rights, ecology, consumer protection – in other words, everything that does not suit the state and (often simultaneously) could run counter to the economic interests of its officials.

Thus, according to the authorities, the Samara Gender Center is a “foreign agent.” The reasoning is directly connected to its collaboration with the Heinrich Böll Foundation. In addition to regular summer school courses on gender themes for young activists and researchers, the foundation and the Gender Center jointly published a series of what might be called popular publications on issues of gender democracy. In particular three books in this series stand out: *Gender dlia* “Chainikov” (1 and 2) (Gender for Beginners) and *Sposoby byt’ mužčinoj* (Ways To Be a Man).

The two “Chainiki” books have the greatest circulation of any Russian-language books of the Heinrich Böll Foundation. So far, 10,000 copies of each volume have been printed. They are in great demand and are (here too, unfortunately, the past tense were would be more appropriate) used in a number of

universities as teaching materials. They offer a collection of more than thirty essays by well-known Russian authors on (almost) all gender issues and – oriented toward everyday Russian reality – attempt to make them accessible to readers with little or no prior knowledge of the subject.

The book *Sposoby byt’ mužčinoj* (Ways To Be a Man) was published in 2013 as the result of a conference on masculinity, the first ever in Russia. The authors are from Russia and abroad. From a variety of perspectives, they discuss the question of what it means or could be mean to be a man in today’s Russia. This book is almost as popular as the “Chainiki” books.

Although these publications seem at first glance to have little subversive content (they are written with a spirit of openness), the authorities in Samara have recognized instruments at work that are a danger to the state. According to a penalty order against the Gender Center, they involve “covert anti-propaganda against social policies” (*Chainikov 1*), “covert anti-propaganda against state demographic policies” (*Chainikov 2*), and “covert anti-propaganda against the constitutional and institutional foundations of the state in the area of family policies” (*Sposoby byt’ mužčinoj*).

One might find that ridiculous or amusing or even simply absurd. However, these precise formulations of a secret service-logic that knows only either obedient followers or open and (much worse) covert enemies have once again become endemic almost everywhere in Russia and are dangerous for those targeted. This applies in particular to the word “covert” (Russian *skrytyj*), since it implies that someone is doing (or has done) something secretly in order to hide it. Together with the wording of the NGO “foreign agent” law, which in any case points in the direction of “spy,” it is not hard for this to turn into charges of treason. The boundaries tend to blur more and more.

The Gender Center thus had good reason to be cautious and decided to disband itself. The center’s work, of course, continues in another form. ■■

Arab Spring: What remains of the revolution?

Five years after the start of the Arab Spring, the mood of a new beginning has given way to disillusionment. In view of the never-ending violence and the return of authoritarian forms of rule, even of failed states, the Arab Spring could be considered largely unsuccessful. Such a sweeping judgment, however, is shortsighted. In Tunisia democratization has advanced relatively far and in Morocco and Jordan the processes of political reform have begun, albeit haltingly. In other countries, however, the protests were forcibly quashed (Bahrain) or devolved into civil war (Syria, Libya). In Egypt, where the democracy movement had initially been very successful, the transformation was undone by a coup. And finally, the ruling houses in the Gulf States have managed to stem public protests through a combination of political repression and financial incentives. Why have the mass protests against the old elites and the demands for political freedom and social justice led thus far to such different results?



In front of a polling place in Egypt, May 2012
Photo: UN Women/Fatma El Zahraa Yassin

Tunisia

Tunisia is still considered the hope of the Arab democracy movement. This is where the Arab Spring began in 2011, triggered by the self-immolation of the street vendor Mohamed Bouazizi in Sidi Bouzid in December 2010. It was an act of desperation that drew attention to the poor living conditions of a majority of the Tunisian population. It sparked a shockwave throughout the country; as a result of the ensuing mass protests, the government stepped down within only a few weeks, with President Ben Ali fleeing to exile in Saudi Arabia. A protracted political transition followed, which climaxed in 2014 with the passage of a new, democratic constitution and free parliamentary and presidential elections. This was overshadowed by a growing social polarization into two camps: conservative and Islamist vs. secular and Western-oriented. The conflict came to a head when Mohamed Brahmi and Chokri Belaid, two prominent

left-wing oppositional members of parliament, were murdered. As a result of social pressure and through mediation by the trade union organization Union Générale Tunisienne du Travail (UGTT), a consensus was ultimately reached. This was made possible, in part, by activists in the Tunisian women's movement, bloggers, representatives of human rights organizations, and intellectuals, who had been critically following the work of the National Constituent Assembly (NCA), objecting to possible restrictions on civil rights and liberties. Another prerequisite for the constitutional compromise was the pragmatic stance of the moderate Islamist Ennahda Movement, the strongest party in the NCA, which ultimately removed additional Islamic references from the draft constitution. The democratic transformation of Tunisia has been rather successful so far for various reasons. For one, the comparatively high level of

- ▶ education of the population and the country's relatively liberal tradition have resulted in a strong civil society. It also helped that Tunisian society was less fragmented along ethnic and religious lines than is the case in many other countries in the region. Religious reform movements have made it easier for civil society and the opposition parties to assert their own demands to counter the theocratic ambitions of the Ennahda.

Tunisia's young democracy passed its first important litmus test with the parliamentary and presidential elections in late 2014. Not only did the elections

proceed freely and fairly, but all parties accepted the outcome, which brought a new majority and a victory for the secular-nationalist Nidaa-Tounes party.

Despite the successes, the challenges facing the country on its path to becoming a consolidated democracy continue to be immense. Grave social problems such as high youth unemployment remain unresolved. In late January 2016 thousands of people again took to the streets to protest unemployment and the lack of prospects. Moreover, the security situation is very tense, as recently became frighteningly clear when devastating terrorist acts in March 2015 in Tunis and in June 2015 in Sousse killed dozens of people, mostly foreign tourists.

Egypt

Since the revolution in 2011 that swept away the Mubarak regime, Egypt has twice gone through radical political upheaval. In early 2011 secular forces and various Islamic organizations protested against the fossilized political caste and for better social conditions and democracy. Many, especially young, activists participated in the revolution with new, innovative forms of political protest – whether via social media or on the streets. After only a few weeks Hosni Mubarak was overthrown. This made Tahrir Square in Cairo, the center of the protest movement, into a symbol of democratic new beginnings in the Arab world. The Muslim Brotherhood, the only organization that was also well-established in the rural areas, was able to take advantage of the January Revolution for their own purposes. Their party won the largely free elections in 2012 and designated Mohamed Morsi as the new president. The liberal and left-wing spectrum was not in a position to offer any real alternative to the Muslim Brotherhood due to organizational difficulties, in particular because the divided parties were unable to develop a joint strategy.

After taking power, however, the Muslim Brotherhood was not able to create a social consensus on important questions for the future. According to Egyptian writer Mansoura Ez-Eldin, they continued to rule in the style of an underground organization. ↗ The Islamist draft constitution, which did not reflect Egypt's religious and cultural diversity, was forced through against the will of the urban middle class. Serious social and economic issues and the establishment of new democratic institutions, however, were neglected. Mass protests resumed, this time against a head of state who had only been in office for a few months.

↗ Link

Ez-Eldin, Mansoura. "Learning from Past Mistakes," Qantara, December 19, 2014, trans. Ruth Martin; <http://en.qantara.de/>

[content/the-revolution-of-25-january-2011-and-its-consequences-learning-from-past-mistakes](http://en.qantara.de/content/the-revolution-of-25-january-2011-and-its-consequences-learning-from-past-mistakes) (accessed March 30, 2016).

The marathon after the sprint

The Tunisians needed only a few weeks for their revolution. But after so many years of a dictatorship it takes a lot of time and patience to set up a functioning democracy and ensure an electoral process that is accepted by all political participants.

The ATED (Association Tunisienne pour l'Éveil Démocratique) is dedicated to this task. Many of its young members had already participated in the revolution and now want to make sure that the delicate transition to a democracy is successful. ATED founded the Mourakiboun (observer) network and together with the Heinrich Böll Foundation developed a concept for this election watchdog and supported its activities.

A small, salaried core team in Tunis coordinated the entire logistical process. All over the country there were volunteer election observers who received only a small allowance to cover transportation and other expenses.

They paid attention to everything: Were the lists of registered voters made available to the public? Did one party bait another one, or even minorities, on Facebook or Twitter? Were identity cards adequately checked? Would a woman on her way to register to vote have to walk past three cafes where men sit and drink tea and make sneering remarks?

Merely the existence of Mourakiboun as a watchdog brought increased fairness to the political process. Especially in dealing with Islamists this was very important. If bearded men tried to create "waiting lines" in front of the polling places, it was reported, as was railing against the Islamist parties as "dark forces."

"I didn't want to go into politics," comments Manel Lahrabi, an election observer from the core team. "But I wanted to contribute to this great thing after the revolution. Meanwhile I cannot imagine doing any other job."

When the military staged a coup in July 2013 and a transitional government was installed, thousands of people on Tahrir Square cheered. Many Egyptians viewed the military coup as a chance to complete the revolution, to continue the process of democratization – once the military restored law and order. This proved to be an illusion. Following the massacre of protesting Morsi supporters, in which security forces killed more than 800 people in August 2013, it became clear that the military would lead the country back to an autocracy. The democratic opening of Egypt was rolled back and all opposition, whether Islamic or secular, was repressed. Freedom of assembly and of opinion became greatly restricted. Forty-five thousand people were thrown into prison and show and mock trials took place. General Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, the new strongman in Egypt, greatly expanded the repressive state apparatus after being elected president. This also had an impact on civil society in Egypt, which had lost its capacity to act. This strategy helped the new ruling powers in Egypt, with financial support from the Gulf States, establish peace and calm in the country, for the time being at least.

Syria

In Syria, as well, citizens protested in early 2011 against the regime, denouncing corruption, cronyism, and police brutality, and demanding more civil rights. With new lyrics to traditional folk songs, graffiti, and social media, voices called for the ouster of President Bashar al-Assad and the establishment of a free, united Syria. Daraa, in southern Syria, is considered the cradle of the revolution, where fifteen teenagers were arrested and tortured in March 2011 for writing anti-government graffiti. The demonstrations demanding their release were brutally suppressed by the regime; marksmen were ordered to fire on unarmed demonstrators. This sparked a wave of protests that spread throughout the country. The Assad regime, which even prior to the Arab Spring was one of the most repressive in the region, was determined from the outset not to make any major political concessions. The government used all powers at its disposal to quash the protest movement. In the very first months, more than a thousand demonstrators were shot by Assad's security forces; there were mass arrests and torture, and countless opponents of the regime "disappeared" without a trace.

In reaction to the regime's brutality, the protest movement, which was initially largely nonviolent, developed into an armed rebellion. Deserters from the Syrian military founded the so-called Free Syrian Army (FSA) in July 2011 as an umbrella organization of various resistance groups. At first they concentrated on protecting the population in opposition strongholds from Assad's army. Starting in 2012 at the latest, the rebels went on the offensive, attacking the Syrian armed forces and taking over

significant regions and urban districts. The level of violence escalated, turning the Syrian civil war into one of the most brutal conflicts since the end of the Second World War, prompting millions of people to flee. Because the Free Syrian Army was unable to protect people from the force of the regime, many groups abandoned the FSA and joined Islamist or jihadist combat units, which were far better equipped thanks to external funding, particularly from the Gulf States. More and more rebel groups were now fighting against the regime and, increasingly, against each other. Neither the FSA leadership nor the Syrian opposition in exile could influence, much less control, them. As of 2013, two offshoots of al-Qaeda are also fighting in Syria: the hard-hitting al-Nusra Front and the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and their allies. The civilian population is currently also subjected to the terror of ISIS (today IS) and its allies.

After five years, vast areas of Syria lie in ruins, half the population has fled, and more than 250,000 people have been killed. Despite the extremely difficult conditions, there are still countless activists inside and outside the country who are engaging in civil resistance and holding fast to their goal of a democratic Syria. They document human rights violations and smuggle information out of the country; they operate media platforms to oppose the regime's war propaganda; they publish their own newspapers or organize workshops on the peaceful coexistence of different religious groups and the democratic future of Syria. First and foremost, however, they provide humanitarian aid in places that are inaccessible to international aid organizations. ■■

Breaking the power of rumors



Image and copyright: Mazen Kerbaj

A gruesome video: It shows a scene in which people are being burned alive. A tweet reports that it is Kurdish soldiers who are burning Arab victims. Message: Death to the Kurds! The same video is shown elsewhere claiming that it is Sunni rebels setting fire to members of the Syrian Alawite minority. Message: Fight the Sunni! At a third site it is supposedly marauding gangs of the Syrian dictator Bashar al-Assad who are burning Sunni. Message: Fight the dictator and his allies!

In fact, the video was filmed in Iraq in 2003. “Such images are multifunctional; they are used by a wide variety of people,” says Mustafa Haid, director of Dawlaty, a human rights organization in Beirut. “And there are hundreds of these videos on the Internet.”

“The less reliable information is available, the more powerful rumors become,” according to Bente Scheller, director of the Middle East office of the Heinrich Böll Foundation in Beirut. This phenomenon is typical during crises and war. And precisely in Syria, the spread of rumors is becoming a growing problem.

“At first the rumors were spread only by the Syrian regime,” notes Haid Haid, former program manager at the Heinrich Böll Foundation office in Lebanon and currently spokesperson for Planet Syria. “Then the opposition started doing it as well. ... They call them ‘positive rumors.’ But there is no such thing. Oppositionists and democracy activists risk their reputations by doing something like that.”

Dawlaty, a small Syrian NGO located in Beirut, therefore worked together with the Heinrich Böll Foundation to develop workshops on “rumor management.” “No one ever did anything like that before,” says Haid. The participants, all of them non-violent oppositionists, are learning how to check the accuracy of rumors. With Google Image, for example, they can search for the actual source. If a

Twitter or Facebook account is only two weeks old and has no followers, then the contents should definitely be questioned. Former fighters from the Lebanese civil war also reported that they too had started and circulated rumors.

“Social media have made it much easier for rumors to be spread. Once something is on the Internet, it is impossible to stop it. That is dangerous in times of war.”

“We want to make it clear that rumors, regardless of the intentions behind their circulation, get out of control and that rumors should always be checked out before they are passed on,” according to Haid. For example, anyone who sends out a call to attend a demonstration against the Syrian regime and spreads the rumor that thousands of people are already there needs to be aware of the consequences of that act. Some people might follow the call and end up being driven into the arms of Syrian security forces.

Social media have made it much easier for rumors to be spread. Once something is on the Internet, it is impossible to stop it. That is dangerous in times of war and a heavy burden later on for efforts to establish a democratic society. ■■

Publication

On rumors and their social function in the Middle East and North Africa see: Perspectives no. 7: Middle East

and North Africa (Nov. 2014); www.boell.de/sites/default/files/perspectives7_rumors.pdf

Trouble in the air: Democracy and extractivism in Latin America

In studies of democracy, Latin America is considered an example of successful democratization. In almost all countries, the transition to at least a formal democracy has been achieved. Earlier, particularly in the second half of the twentieth century, the political face of the continent had been characterized by authoritarian regimes and military dictatorships.

Peaceful regime change through elections is considered proof that the shadows of the past have been overcome, in South America clearly more than in Central America and Mexico. Weak institutions and democratic deficits are generally assessed as transitional problems. A strong, articulated civil society is regarded as a guarantee that democracies can continue to consolidate.

Nevertheless, the increasing appearance of structural deficits is raising doubts as to how firmly the democratization is actually anchored. This is closely tied to the economic basis of the Latin American economies, most of which are pursuing a commodity-based path of development.

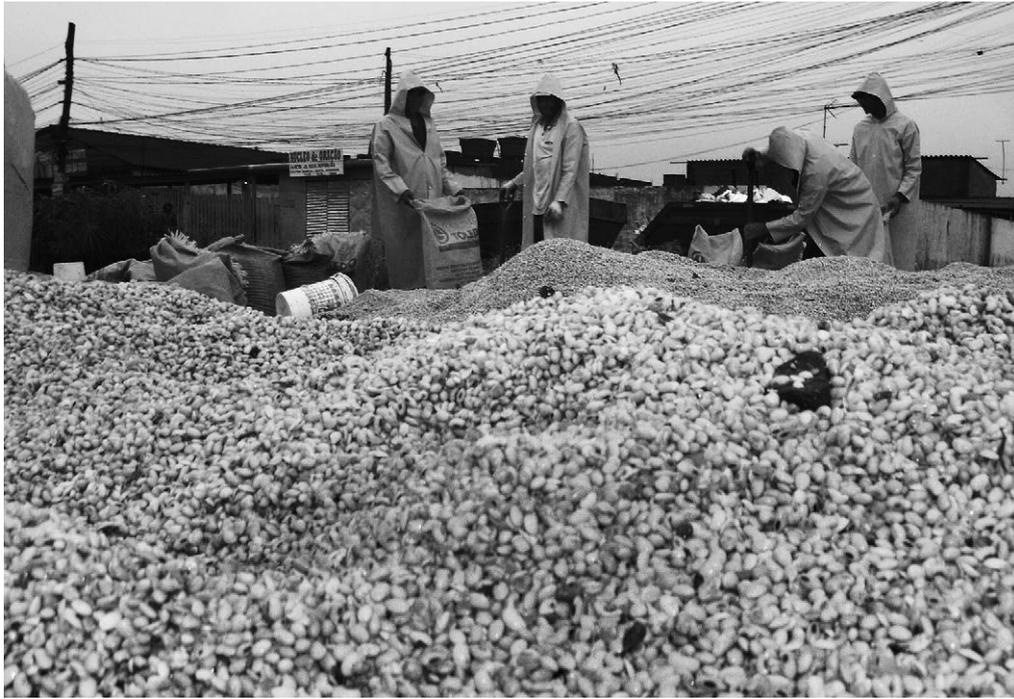


Copper mine in Chile Photo: Frank Jakobi

The price of the commodity boom

The great demand on the world market for mineral, fossil, and agricultural resources, and the resulting high prices, have led in Latin America to an expansion of the commodity sector since the mid-1990s. In some countries people thus speak of a “re-primarization” of the economy, that is, the increasing importance of natural resources within the economy as a whole and a corresponding decline in the relative significance of the manufacturing sector.

It is mostly bulk producers who profit from these developments. This includes large state-owned oil firms such as *Petróleos de Venezuela*, *PEMEX* in Mexico, and the Brazilian company *Petrobrás*, as well as foreign companies such as the Canadian mining company *Barrick Gold*, whose mining project triggered numerous protests on both sides of the Andes in Argentina and Chile. Conflicts in the affected regions have been on the rise as the local population increasingly resists the very destructive activities,



Soybeans from Brazil Photo: Márcio Garon

- ▶ which not only cause massive damage to the ecosystem, but also threaten and destroy local social structures.

For the large-scale cultivation of, for example, soy, sugar cane, and corn, the application of chemical fertilizers and pesticides pollutes the ground and groundwater. Forests are razed for extensive livestock breeding, permanently shifting the boundaries of natural areas. Mining and oil production pollute the water, air, and soil.

The needs of the local population, which in some cases has been living there for centuries, are scarcely considered, instead being sacrificed to the ostensible

“Latin America has undergone the most drastic urbanization worldwide, with almost 80 percent of the population living in cities.”

progress or even simply to profit interests. If their land is needed for the extraction of natural resources, quasi-legal means are employed to force them to relocate. If, due to contamination, the land can no longer be cultivated, fishing in the rivers is almost impossible, and drinking water is scarce or polluted, then the inhabitants lose their livelihood and traditional sources of income. For these reasons, many feel compelled to leave their homes and move to urban centers. Latin America has undergone the most drastic urbanization worldwide, with almost 80 percent of the population living in cities.

Latin America: Model for new development paths?

Since the late 1990s elections in a majority of Latin American countries have led to center-left governments whose politics are progressive or even revolutionary. In particular Venezuela, Bolivia, and Ecuador, but also Brazil, Uruguay, and Argentina, have abandoned classical neoliberal dogma and have started pursuing various policies with a stronger focus on social development and fighting poverty. The new commodity boom was and is viewed as an opportunity to substantially increase state revenue in order to finance development and social programs. This requires a stronger state and greater control over resource appropriation than was the case under the former neoliberal governments. At the same time, the state provides the necessary infrastructure through the construction (and expansion) of roads, ports, dams, etc. These policies are referred to as “neo-extractivism” or “new extractivism.”

This raises the question as to whether it will be possible to redirect the “resource curse” into a “resource blessing”: Can the wealth in natural resources, which for many centuries benefited only a small elite and consequently left most of the population impoverished and oppressed, be used for a different development – one that is more social and democratic and benefits society as a whole?

Resource curse or blessing?

The record up to now is very ambivalent. Critical voices are getting louder, questioning the present path of development. It must be considered a success that poverty in these countries has been significantly reduced, more than the Latin American average. ❗



Protest against the Belo Monte dam, Brazil Photo: Pedro Biondi

However, it is uncertain how lasting these changes will be. Particularly in the social sector, critics emphasize that social welfare programs such as Bolsa Familia in Brazil have not introduced any structural changes that would help people break out of poverty in the long term. If state revenues from the extraction of natural resources collapse, as is presently happening, poverty could again increase.

In contrast to social aspects, the ecological record is clear: Up to now there is no evidence that neo-extractivism has any less detrimental impact on the environment and the local population than is the case in countries with a neoliberal orientation. Here as well, there are conflicts and social tensions, as well as resistance to planned or existing large-scale projects. Criticism and protests also develop because the consultation and participation rights of the affected populations are circumvented.

Majority versus minority rights

Advocates and opponents of the neo-extractivist development model have in the meantime become strongly polarized, whereby protecting the environment and combating poverty are presented as mutually exclusive goals. Those opposing extractivist resource developments are labeled adversaries of social development as a whole and face restrictions on their fundamental democratic and progressive rights of participation. This development is not limited to

progressive governments, but can be encountered in almost all commodity-based economies in Latin America.

Democracy deficits arise where there are decreasing opportunities for participation at the local level while at the same time the central power and presidential systems become strengthened. This is frequently accompanied by severe restrictions on the efficacy and authority of the parliament. Political and economic development strategies, as well as concrete investment projects, are increasingly decided in a top-down manner, often in conjunction with key economic stakeholders.

Ostensible majority rights are thereby played out against minority rights. The extractivist projects are generally located in regions that are relatively sparsely populated – often by indigenous peoples. Convention 169 (1989) of the International Labor Organization (ILO) stipulates that the affected indigenous populations have to give their prior, free, and informed consent, but these participatory rights are often circumvented. The revenues collected usually benefit the urban majority population, especially in countries with progressive governments. Thus approval among the population at large is correspondingly high, while opponents of this form of development are marginalized. Those bearing political responsibility continue to find legitimation in national and regional elections. However, their tone

Information

In Bolivia, for example, 38.8% of the population in 2000 lived in extreme poverty. In 2012 the figure was 18.7%. In comparison: Ecuador 31.8% (2000)/12.9% (2012); Venezuela 18.0% (2000)/9.7% (2012), Brazil 13.2% (2002)/5.4% (2012). In

Latin America as a whole, absolute poverty rates fell from 19.3% in 2001 to 11.3% in 2012; see CEPAL 2013: http://estadisticas.cepal.org/cepalstat/web_cepalstat/estadisticasIndicadores.asp?idioma=i.

and actions vis-à-vis their critics have become increasingly harsh.

Maintaining power is therefore closely tied to export proceeds and thus to high revenues. Despite free elections, power is established upon a very unsound basis (from a democratic perspective), threatening the continued existence and further development of the democracy.

“ This raises the question as to whether it will be possible to redirect the ‘resource curse’ into a ‘resource blessing’: Can the wealth in natural resources, which for many centuries benefited only a small elite ..., be used for a different development – one that is more social and democratic and benefits society as a whole? ”

And money stinks after all

Recent corruption scandals in Brazil and Chile have brought to light blatantly illegal manipulation of democratic structures, regardless of political orientation. Whereas in the past, cases of bribery had been frowned upon yet largely accepted as inevitable or even as trivial, the recent revelations were veritable political earthquakes. In both of these countries, comprehensive systems of corruption were uncovered, revealing clearly the extent to which large corporations are able to directly influence the political system. Members of parliament and their staffs were bribed on a grand scale. The money served not only for personal gain, but was used in particular to illegally finance election campaigns of politicians and parties. In neoliberal Chile the major mining and agricultural corporations were involved, whereas in Brazil, with a more social democratic government, a system of bribery and personal advantage was discovered chiefly in connection with contracts of Petrobrás, Brazil’s semi-public oil company, though also with other public companies as well. Virtually all major Brazilian multinational construction companies are involved, as are the two most important parties in the government coalition, PT and PMDB, and one smaller party, as well as public officials and intermediaries from the financial sector.

The systemic magnitude of these cases underscores the fragility of the democratic structures and at least some of their institutions in these commodity-based economies. The massive corruption raises various questions with respect to democracy

theory. Will it lead simply to replacing those people involved or to a general democracy fatigue? A large segment of the population in Latin America already believes that democracy is not the best system of government. ¶

Another question that must be raised is how expensive election campaigns should be and how they and political parties should be financed in order to minimize the potential for corruption. Providing solid public funding, while simultaneously limiting and effectively monitoring private party donations, would be important instruments to this end.

One-sided economies based only on the extraction of natural resources do not constitute a sustainable development concept. This is true regardless of the political leanings of the government in the respective country. Resource extraction as it is presently organized harms the environment and negatively impacts the local population. Opposition to this is targeted and marginalized, at the expense of democracy. The successes are uncertain and prove to be relatively short-lived. The environmental damage, however, is long-term and the threats to democracy are obvious.

Therefore, the question must be posed as to whether a consolidated democracy also requires consolidated – that is, differentiated – economic structures. The quality of a democracy is measured not only by free elections, but also by whether or not it is able to strengthen social cohesion, decrease poverty and social inequality, and establish gender equity. ■■

¶ Information

Only 36.8% of Mexico’s population thinks that democracy is the best kind of government; in Brazil the figure is 48.5%, in Chile 63.3%, in Argentina 72.8% (see *Latinobarómetro 2013*: <http://www.latinobarometro.org/>). In comparison, the figures in Germany in 2014 are:

western Germany 90% and eastern Germany 82% (Bundesministerium für Wirtschaft und Energie (ed.): *Deutschland 2014. 25 Jahre Friedliche Revolution und Deutsche Einheit* (brief summary of results) (Berlin 2015), 26.

2

Democracy Assistance – Stocktaking and Challenges

Development instead of democracy?

Because the wealthier countries were (almost) all democracies, it was long assumed that prosperity and democracy are intrinsically linked. Influencing this assumption was American political scientist Seymour Martin Lipset, who in 1959 stated that economic prosperity brings forth democratic values and patterns of behavior and leads to the formation of a large middle class. This optimistic theory of modernization simply assumed that poorer societies would develop in this direction and thereby become democratic.

But what is the connection between democracy and development? Does development lead to democracy? Or is democracy a prerequisite for development? These questions have been studied and debated for more than fifty years. An unambiguous causal relationship between democracy and development evidently does not exist, neither in one direction nor the other.

The economic success of authoritarian regimes has challenged what was long considered a robust connection between development and democracy. Can it be that countries with an authoritarian system perhaps organize economic growth more effectively, especially in poor countries that have further to go to catch up? In contrast to the 1960s and 1970s, when this question was first posed for smaller countries with rudimentary structures, this has since become a point of contention in global politics.

In the 1980s, several East Asian countries attracted attention due to their phenomenal growth rates: Singapore, South Korea, and Taiwan. These were countries with authoritarian regimes and political parties that had long been dominant. A debate ensued on the model of a “developing state,” which was further fueled by fast and furious modernization in Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, and China. Well-established democracies were amazed, but they tended to feel challenged more at an economic level than a political one.

The end of the Cold War – the implosion of the Soviet Union and the collapse of many authoritarian regimes in Africa – led to great hopes for democracy as a driving force for development. In Africa in particular, with its devastating record of authoritarian rule, self-sustaining economic growth finally seemed achievable within a framework of multiple-party elections, good governance, and private investments. Western development cooperation attempted to promote this process: through incentives for good governance, advice on establishing and reforming

institutions, and by strengthening the judiciary and supporting civil society groups.

Success remained meager. More than just a few elected rulers turned out to be autocrats as well, and they continued business as usual; the improved growth rates were often the result of an enclave economy exporting resources. Such development is not sustainable, and the living conditions for a majority of the population hardly improved.

Spectacular development was reported, in contrast, by some authoritarian Asian countries: Vietnam, Cambodia, and – still – China. When Europe and the United States were shaken by the financial and economic crisis in 2008, the hour of the Beijing Consensus had come. In distinction to the Washington Consensus, symbolized by the institutions of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) located there, the Beijing Consensus describes the Chinese model of development: a concept based on state capitalism and implemented by an authoritarian regime.

China itself, which was long intent on continuing to present itself as a developing country even as it rose to become a global power, had already begun propagating its authoritarian development path. The Western democracies, in their hour of economic weakness, were now being challenged politically as well. In addition to a new, self-confident voice came new self-regulating institutions, such as the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and the New Development Bank (NDB) of the BRICS states, both founded in 2014. While these finance “development,” they have no interest in spending much time, if any at all, on democracy.

With the Beijing Consensus, the authoritarian rulers of less successful developing countries, as well, have found a response to the Western pronouncements and incentives they so dislike. Finally they can turn their backs on the old colonial powers and their friends. When other authoritarian regimes and one-



Campaign against corruption in Rwanda Photo: Leandro Neumann Ciuffo

party states enjoy development achievements, these governments view it as a confirmation of their own course, even though they do not necessarily take similar steps.

Even prior to this, two African heads of state had already rolled up their sleeves. Rwanda's president Paul Kagame wants to turn his country into the "Singapore of Africa" and can boast of substantial achievements: The per capita income has doubled in the last ten years. Ethiopia is also pursuing a concept of a developing state with an ambitious

plan for growth and transformation. It has experienced growth of ten percent annually for ten years and claims to have largely achieved the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), even exceeding some of the targets. Both heads of state direct not only the economy but also the society; they do not tolerate any opposition, which they persecute relentlessly wherever dissidents still dare to become active. The "Kigali Consensus" involves a clear rejection of civil rights and democratic participation.

Thus the economic success of authoritarian governments has developed into a countermovement to democracy. It allows the regimes to present themselves to their own citizens as a driving force for development. To this end they also receive approval, either openly or on the quiet, from some business leaders in the Western world as well as from development policy makers, who now and again praise and co-finance their progress. The regimes gladly cite this as a confirmation, which makes the situation all the more difficult for activists fighting for and defending human rights. Development policy makers are thus forced to face the question as to whether they might – unintentionally – be supporting authoritarian regimes and leaving the democratic opposition out in the cold.

“Democracy does not automatically lead to development; whether or not it succeeds depends on numerous factors and each case is different.”

Economically successful authoritarian regimes that are comfortably in power can also enjoy reelection on a regular basis, as they have everything under their control. With such internal and external legitimation, they can therefore reject any intervention into their internal affairs and are unwilling to participate in sanctions regimes against other countries. Here authoritarian states depart from the standards established within the framework of global governance. They implement their own notion of development and do not allow any interference from civil society within their own country, much less from abroad.

For this reason the foreign support of domestic NGOs is a thorn in their side. More and more governments are attempting to control, impede, or prohibit NGOs. This has consequences for democracy assistance, which thereby loses not only a share of its partners, but also a share of its legitimacy its ability to promote democratic structures with “soft power,” money and encouraging words. Lipset’s old prognosis of the democratic awakening of the middle class remains as a new hope for better times. The strategists of authoritarian power are aware of this “danger” and attempt to confront it by, for example, referring to the past and appealing to the nationalistic spirit. The rise of formerly weak countries does not occur within the parameters of a shared understanding, but in the shadows of history.

The new systemic competition for better growth statistics neglects two significant perspectives. First, the majority of all of human beings would like to live in a democracy, as confirmed by numerous surveys. Democracy is a value in and of itself; living in a democratic community means far more than what can be provided by economic growth. Living conditions are

better in places where human rights are respected and the rule of law is guaranteed. Criticism can be expressed in a democracy and politicians can be held accountable; power can change hands as a result of elections and policies can be altered. This also has an impact on the economy. However, democracy does not automatically lead to development; whether or not it succeeds depends on numerous factors and each case is different.

Second, focusing on growth rates blinds us to the essential and long-standing debate about the limits to and the price of growth. As early as 1972 the Club of Rome attracted attention with its study showing that the actions of all individuals have a global impact that exceeds their sphere of action and time frame. This report – which has been translated into thirty languages and sold more than 30 million copies – startled the world with its prognosis that many resources are finite and humanity will encounter absolute growth limits.

In 1967 the Brundtland Report, “Our Common Future,” defined the term “sustainable development.” Through the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro (1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development, UNCED), this gave rise to a global discourse that was adopted in many action plans (such as Agenda 21). Some economists have meanwhile abandoned the cultural preoccupation with purely quantitative economic growth; they now support qualitative growth and recognize that economic achievements and prosperity are not the same thing, and can even contradict each other.

Even if the authoritarian model of development can currently boast of good growth figures and seemingly shine with effectiveness and efficiency, growth is not guaranteed and cannot be attained in the long term without risks and side effects. According to Indian economist Amartya Sen, “the protective power of democracy may not be missed much when a country is lucky enough to be facing no serious calamity, when everything is going quite smoothly.” When calamities do arise, however, this protective power will be sorely needed.

With the authoritarian development model, a countermovement opposing democracy has grown out of the economic successes of authoritarian governments. This is just one facet of the challenges facing democracy assistance projects. The essays in this chapter offer an in-depth analysis of the challenges, opposing forces, and options facing democracy assistance. ■■

Democracy assistance against a headwind

An essay by Renate Wilke-Launer

Interventions

US president Woodrow Wilson was presumably the first to express the ambition to realize democracy also outside of his own country. Against the backdrop of the debate on the founding of the League of Nations, he attested before the 8,000 members of his audience in Boston on February 24, 1919, that “We set this Nation up to make men free and we did not confine our conception and purpose to America.” For no other country is “democracy export” so much a part of its identity and no other country has worked so intensively for decades and has invested so much money promoting democracy in other parts of the world. Postwar reconstruction of the defeated countries of Japan and Germany is probably the best-known example of this policy.

External democratization policies have repeatedly conflicted with the geostrategic interests of the United States as a world power, however, and all too often have been sacrificed. Many people have paid for this with their lives and others have remained subject to the whims of dictators or seen their right to self-determination blatantly disregarded. Some of these interventions have left a lasting impression in the memories of the peoples involved. One particular example is US president George W. Bush’s rhetoric of spreading democracy in his attempts to justify the invasion of Iraq (2003); this continues to overshadow much of the debate on the external promotion of democracy to the present day. Also not forgotten are the colonial policies of European countries and their subsequent interventions, especially those of France and Britain.

Democracy assistance did not become a “booming industry” until the early 1990s, both in the United States and Europe as well as in multilateral organizations. Efforts to assist democracy

have been established in well over a hundred countries, with the goal of initiating developments toward democracy, strengthening democratic initiatives and institutions, and ultimately consolidating a democratic system. They are part of a country's foreign policy – and of its security policies, to a certain extent – but especially of its development policies.

In the international sphere, diplomatic means can be used to impose sanctions for violations of democratic rules or to promote reform – sometimes successfully and sometimes for naught. Standards are agreed upon and monitored by international bodies; in regional coalitions attempts are made to persuade autocrats. In this area as well, the record is mixed. The European Union has even offered EU membership to neighboring states interested in reform; that is likely the most effective incentive program for encouraging the adoption of democratic standards.

A number of UN peacekeeping missions have virtually organized a “new start” under international oversight, secured through troops on the ground and with the assistance of personnel from all over the world. Elections have always been part of this process, as an initial step towards returning responsibility to the representatives of the country. In some case (e.g., Namibia) things progressed in an exemplary manner; in others (Cambodia) the success did not last; in South Sudan the elaborate process of founding and establishing a completely new country devolved into a new, bloody conflict. In development politics, democracy assistance operates in three major areas: organizing and supporting elections; supporting the conversion and establishment of structures and institutions based on the rule of law (constitutions, judiciary, police and regulatory facilities such as auditing offices); and strengthening civil society through NGOs, associations, independent media, etc.

The objective is always to reinforce the rights of individuals (and thus also of minorities), to foster a change in values, and to shift power relationships in society such that political power can be limited. This allows voters, parliaments, the justice system,

independent agencies, and the media to ensure that ultimately there is “good governance” and that the democracy is sustainable.

Disillusionment

There was great optimism twenty-five years ago: All over the world, democracy was on the rise, doors that had been closed were now wide open, and liberal democracies of the West were considered attractive, some even as models. In particular, the “founding elections” in many countries were truly celebrated. In the meantime, however, disillusionment has set in. Democracy assistance is also being criticized for being too focused on elections, or too naïve as far as independent institutions are concerned, or blinded by wishful thinking as regards civil society.

Elections might first proceed freely and fairly under international monitoring, but the next time be cleverly manipulated. Institutions can have their headquarters in beautiful buildings, with new computers and well-trained staffs, but still be corrupt or lack the courage to reprimand those in power. Groups in civil society might accomplish little more than being brilliant at international conferences and submitting the desired reports to the financial backers. All of this has unfortunately been observed in practice and is just as much a part of the record as the many successful programs and projects.

A look at the sponsors also raises doubts as to whether they are always on the proper path: There are countless actors, they are seldom effectively coordinated and self-(preservation) interests are obvious. If a country is at the beginning of its democratization process, such as, recently, Tunisia and Myanmar, not only is there a constant stream of friendly helpers, but they sometimes end up stepping on each other’s toes. The locals then feel more overwhelmed than assisted. Other sites of democratization, on the other hand, have been abruptly abandoned.

The number of NGOs, and even more so their popularity with financial backers, has grown exponentially almost every-

where in the world. No program offering financial or developmental assistance to a particular country can get by without invoking the significance of civil society. Many assistance measures today are implemented via NGO channels, rendering them part of the “development policy-industrial complex” on both sides. This leads increasingly to critical – though seldom self-critical – questions, but rarely to any results.

This increased focus on promoting civil society aims to avoid the “dangers” that lurk in projects involving cooperation with state structures. In order to succeed, however, a sustainable democracy needs representative state institutions that are accountable. The legitimation of a democracy through elections and a system of competing parties is indispensable, but it was long taboo to support political parties, and even today it is still frowned upon as part of democracy assistance.

There are good reasons for this: Many political parties are centered around individual party leaders, who also dominate the party; some parties do not have a concrete program, have very weak organization, are not firmly anchored in society, and are often corrupt and dependent on wealthy backers. Changing them remains a difficult albeit necessary task. This also requires transparent rules for party funding, which exist hardly anywhere in the world. The recent bribery scandals in certain Latin American countries considered to possess generally functioning democracies have shaken the credibility of the entire political class, fueling the disenchantment with democracy.

There are many reasons why democracy assistance needs oversight and a good dose of modesty. It is difficult to say – especially in the short term – precisely where it has been successful. The so-called “attrition problem” can multiply here. It is not possible to determine exactly which programs and projects have what impact. After reading a number of different evaluation reports and studies, Peter Burnell (2007) assessed democracy assistance as having an aggregate score of “around 3.5” on a scale of 1 to 10, though he emphasized that this figure “should be taken with a pinch of salt.”

In his assessment of twenty-five years of democracy aid, Thomas Carothers of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace has attested to the learning experience from the measures taken, but he also noted that democracy aid has to deal with many of the problems and weaknesses that are intrinsic to development assistance. Moreover, according to Carothers, the standards for planning, monitoring, and evaluation that have been developed over time have led to “artificial and reductionist program indicators, rigid implementation frameworks, and unrealistic goals – all things that work directly against key lessons from experience about the need for flexible, adaptive programming.”

The “political economy” of the aid industry is not necessarily beneficial to democratization, not only because programs are conceived externally and top-down, and have to function according to the logic of the aid providers, but also because, in the differentiated donor landscape, contracts are given to third parties who sometimes live off these benefits and frequently adapt accordingly so as not to jeopardize their “market share.” They therefore prefer activities in which successes can be produced quickly and quantitatively, and prefer to avoid any conflict with the host country, as that could threaten their activities there. As Sarah Sunn Bush of Temple University in Philadelphia put it, this contributes to the “taming of democracy assistance.”

Interests

Democracy assistance is an arduous business that demands much patience, has risks and side effects, and takes years before it pays off – which it may or may not do. Twenty-five years after the start of the major democracy assistance programs, the tone has become subdued and more questions have arisen.

This begins with elections, which many consider the key aspect of democracy. How should we respond if forces take power that do not think in terms of civil rights, but rather ethnic

dominance, as in some African countries? Or groups that wish to impose their religious ideas on the entire country? Or parties whose notion of democracy necessarily sees them in power, as has been the case with many former liberation movements? Or resolute strategists who simply wish to end democracy by taking power themselves?

Election monitoring, an important and widespread instrument for fostering democracy, has also lost some of its innocence and particularly its credibility. For example, when a number of teams arrive but fail to assess according to the same strict criteria, instead turning a blind eye, or even two – as did the Southern African Development Community (SADC) in the case of Zimbabwe – this hardly inspires confidence. Zimbabwean author Chenjerai Hove, who died in 2015, disdainfully referred to these people as “airport observers.” In 2013 Azerbaijan’s president Ilham Aliyev knew how to juxtapose the very critical election assessment of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) with the friendly one of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), which he steered in the “right” – approving – direction (“free, fair, and transparent”). Attempts have long been made to invite only observers who are biased or compliant from the outset. For the Venezuelan parliamentary elections in December 2015, for example, the government accepted “accompaniment” only from the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR), which is well-disposed toward the regime, but no election observers from the Organization of American States (OAS), of which the United States is a member.

Anyone who travels around the world to further democracy and comes from a country that provides aid is forced to face critical questions about his or her own democracy. Why does any potential United States presidential candidate need to have sufficient capital or know how to mobilize it? Isn’t something wrong with a democracy in which so many young people are unemployed? The American invasion of Iraq is often mentioned in the context of assertions that spreading democracy is only a pretense countries use to defend their own interests, force

foreign governments out of office, and throw a country's population into disaster. Other remarks one hears are: "One can see in Iraq today how devastating the invasion has been" And: "The invasion in Afghanistan is simply a disaster that has cost millions."

While the restraints of the Cold War's opposing systems might be gone, and the imperative of securing a supply of oil somewhat relaxed, other interests now counteract the lofty principles of furthering democracy: first and foremost the fight against terrorism, then the maintenance of "stability" in certain regions and, again and again, those disdainful economic interests. Former Western heads of state offer their services to authoritarian regimes as "advisors" for large sums of money. All of this is observed and judged critically from a distance and – let's not fool ourselves – there are plenty of political businesspeople out there who know how to exploit weaknesses, deficits, contradictions, and ruthlessness to their own advantage.

Headwind

Mobilization against democracy assistance has been organized for a long time already. It is grounded above all on the "sovereignty" of a particular country, which is a key category in international law and carries very strong emotional weight, given the decolonization struggles in many countries. From this perspective democracy assistance aimed against an incumbent government, or even striving for regime change, is considered an inadmissible intervention in the internal affairs of another country. The successful "color revolutions" of the early 2000s startled those in power in many countries, especially in Eurasia. Under no circumstances do these governments wish to face such symbolically charged campaigns that are led by well-educated and networked young people and that captivate the attention of the media. Having barely gotten over the shock, they started tightening screws to prevent such protests from developing in the first place. And if they managed to flare up after all, then at least they could not be fanned from abroad.

First and foremost was the Russian government, for which the “color revolutions” in the former Soviet republics meant not only regime change but also a change of course, a movement toward the West. Russia therefore imposed massive restrictions on NGOs financed from abroad. This sent a message to many other countries, virtually giving them a green light to take their own actions against undesired civil society activism. Restrictions on civil society activities now exist in more than sixty countries – through general laws, legal and logistical barriers, controls, public defamation, and open repression. And wherever measures are taken against NGOs, critical journalists are also a target. The pressure comes not only from the governments, but also from social groups and forces, including criminal organizations (such as in Mexico, where eighty-eight journalists have been murdered since 2000, and most of the cases have never been solved).

The color revolutions triggered downright paranoia in some governments. Since then, many authoritarian rulers view demands for human rights and democracy as attacks aimed at regime change. For that reason they have resorted to preemptive measures, including alliances of convenience with other countries in order to reinterpret prevailing standards of global cooperation and to defend their own development paths. Beyond cultural borders and some conflicts of interest, such alliances of convenience have postulated new (discursive) rules. For example, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), which increasingly sees itself as the linchpin of a new, multipolar world order, ratified a development strategy in July 2015 which indirectly opposes universal human rights and thus also the attendant obligations.

Russia is leading the campaign in the UN Human Rights Council to position “traditional values” against universal human rights. In 2012 Russia co-sponsored a resolution for “a better understanding and appreciation of traditional values.” The council passed a resolution to protect the (traditional) family in 2014 and another in 2015. Attempts by Uruguay (2014) and South Africa

(2015) to include the entire diversity of families were not even discussed due to a trick involving a point of order.

Respect for sovereignty, nonintervention in internal affairs, acknowledgement of civilizational diversity and traditional values – that is the normative cement of this countermovement opposing the values of liberal democracies. However, it rarely targets democracy per se, but rather attempts to single out the weak points and downsides of its liberal Western form and, as regards gender relations and religion, attacks what it calls moral degeneracy.

Many countries are no longer willing to be assessed by other countries and present their own perspectives and their interests as being opposed to those of the outsiders. China and Russia, in particular, are using their media for this purpose. The state-run Chinese television company CCTV has massively expanded its presence in the world and uses this to advertise itself with “soft power.” Journalist Mohamed Keita described their methods as follows: “China and African governments tend to agree that the press should focus on collective achievements and mobilize public support for the state, rather than report on divisive issues or so-called negative news.” Russia maintains the pro-government international broadcaster RT and launched the Sputnik multimedia agency as a large-scale offensive to counter the “obsessive propaganda of the unipolar world”; this serves to defend Russia and demonize the West.

In contrast to the expectations at the start of the major democracy assistance programs, there has been no linear movement toward greater and deeper democracy. Instead, Western democracies have clearly lost some of their appeal. The winds have changed and their democracy assistance, which started out with a strong tailwind, has been facing a headwind for quite some time now.

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Democracy assistance and the political participation of women

Democracy needs women, and women need democracy. In recent decades this self-evident fact has repeatedly been affirmed and demanded. In 1979 it was codified in the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women, as stated in the preamble: "Convinced that the full and complete development of a country, the welfare of the world and the cause of peace require the maximum participation of women on equal terms with men in all fields." The action plans of the World Conference on Women (in 1995 in Beijing) has operationalized everything down to the last detail as to what has to be done.

Regarding political participation, however, and in many other areas as well, things are not moving fast enough. The UN General Assembly stated in December 2011 (A/RES/66/130) that it was "highly concerned" that women all over the world remain largely marginalized in the political sphere, and demanded many individual steps be taken to finally change that. There was not much passion on the subject; a debate in the plenary meeting was not desired and the resolution was adopted without a vote.

Presently, twenty-two percent of all members of legislative bodies worldwide are women. That is less than what was demanded in the Beijing Platform for Action in 1995 (30 percent). The fact that the percentage increased at all is due primarily to the tenacity of women throughout the world who are fighting for it. Precisely where the situation is still difficult and sometimes even dangerous, the Heinrich Böll Foundation has provided support. In the meantime, while quotas are not undisputed and opposition to them continues, in many societies they are nevertheless accepted or tolerated as a necessary instrument. The disillusionment about the persistence of patriarchal structures has underscored this insight. Political quotas currently exist in 122 countries, by law in constitutions and electoral laws (largely in Latin America), as reserved seats in parliaments (in the Arab world, southern Asia, and some African countries), or as a voluntary obligation of political parties (in Europe and Africa). Half of all countries have women's quotas for their parliamentary elections.

The tailwind experienced by international policies relating to women and the insight that quotas are imperative has also given momentum to democracy assistance from the perspective of gender politics. This is particularly apparent in post-conflict societies, in which UN missions have tried to

implement comprehensive aid toward stabilization and democratization. Consultation by international experts has been combined with the efforts of local elites in order to satisfy "modern" standards. Thus even in very conservative societies (as regards gender roles), a basis could be created for a certain presence of women in politics.

With international involvement, local women('s

"Discrimination and violence are unfortunately part of the everyday experience of many women through the world. Empowering them in their political, economic, social, and cultural human rights remains a key aspect of our democratization strategies."

Barbara Unmüßig, president of the Heinrich Böll Foundation

groups) have been able to achieve greater weight and have been "upgraded" through diverse support programs in order to make use of the new stipulations in constitutions and electoral legislation. The Heinrich Böll Foundation has taken part in this, always attentive that the increased visibility of women in politics be connected to participation and changes in gender policies as well, and that politics in general become more humane. However, an increased presence of women does not automatically guarantee good parliamentary work and good politics.

Through quotas it has been possible to improve the representation of women. This is not undisputed (in some countries there has been resistance to what is considered a regulation prescribed from abroad) and this progress is not irreversible, as demonstrated by the example of Afghanistan, on which the Heinrich Böll Foundation has carried out a number of studies. However, it is irrefutable that democratization and the democracy assistance of the past twenty-five years have contributed to establishing the women's quota in international politics. ■■■

Civil society under pressure: Shrinking – closing – no space

An essay by Barbara Unmüßig

A disconcerting trend has been perceptible for quite some time. Governments across all continents – irrespective of their political orientation and regime type – are taking drastic action against civil society actors: against nongovernmental organizations, social and ecological activists, women’s rights activists and human rights advocates. The space for actors who are critical of government policies, who call for democracy and human rights, who take an active stand against large-scale projects, and who protest against social injustice, land grabbing, and environmental degradation is shrinking. These actors are increasingly the focus of state and private powers and the target of vilification campaigns, repression, or criminalization. As a political foundation with its roots firmly planted in the civil societies of our partner countries, we have experienced first-hand how their space is being restricted and how it is becoming virtually impossible for them to carry out their political activities. An independent and critical civil society is not just a thorn in the side of a multitude of governments in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East; these same governments are fighting civil society to an extent unheard of in the past twenty-five years.

Civil society – no thanks!

Intimidating, vilifying, or even banning civil society is nothing new. Many people have been denied the fundamental rights of freedom of assembly, association, and speech that are entrenched in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948, and this denial continues even today. We have been seeing setbacks for quite some time: the space granted civil society actors

to carry out their activities is being massively restricted. This is true not only of authoritarian or semi-authoritarian regimes but also of democratic governments. Some of the advances made in democratization in Eastern Europe, Africa, and Latin America in the aftermath of the Cold War (“Third Wave Democracy”) have quite simply been reversed. The rights to participation and involvement are being taken away again. What is more, an increasing number of nations are jointly embarking on an outright “counteroffensive” against an active citizenry.

Dozens of countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America, Eastern Europe, and the Middle East have long thwarted external democracy assistance – whether governmental or nongovernmental. To achieve this, they deploy a plethora of measures ranging from legislation to bureaucratic and tax regulations, harassment, smear campaigns in the media, as well as secret service methods and open repression. Every form of restriction appears to be allowed: activists are arrested, bank accounts frozen, threats made, licenses revoked, websites blocked, registrations coerced, and offices closed.

NGO legislation booming

A veritable boom has occurred in so-called NGO laws governing relations between domestic and foreign nongovernmental organizations (cash flow, registrations, reporting obligations, etc.). Laws of this nature are unquestionably legitimate (e.g., as protection against money laundering). However, it is vital that such regulations do not undermine the right of association but respect the independence of organizations. NGOs are under pressure not only in Russia, Turkey, and India; in more than sixty countries, NGO laws have either been passed or initiated over the past three years. In its most recent report, CIVICUS, a global organization for citizen participation, pointed to ninety-six significant restrictions on the rights of civil society in the period between June 2014 and May 2015.

The core concern of the new or amended NGO laws is to cut the flow of foreign cash to domestic organizations and/or to place the flow of money under state control. A law passed in Ethiopia in 2009, for example, prohibits all domestic NGOs receiving more than ten percent of their budget from abroad from engaging in any form of political activity. In Israel, the government voted to support a bill that, if passed, would require NGOs that receive more than 50 percent of their funding from foreign governments to detail those funding sources. This shows the ambivalence of the governments concerned: money for NGOs should continue to flow into the country but then for purely social or ecological projects with no designs on any form of political engagement whatsoever.

India's Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA) grants NGOs receiving money from abroad a "license" that dictates that ultimately no political activities may be funded with that money. For some time, India's authorities have intensified their efforts to check whether the various legislative requirements are being observed. Among the most prominent victims of the intensified checks conducted by India's government is Greenpeace India: the organization's FCRA license has been revoked, and some of its bank accounts blocked.

The specific means of restricting space and of intimidation include the registration rules and the regulations governing reporting obligations. Russia's NGO law has gained notoriety and found its emulators (e.g., in Malaysia and in an Israeli bill). Those receiving money from abroad must be registered and treated as "foreign agents." The term "foreign agent" is used not only in NGO laws. Labeling critical minds and actors as "Western agents" has been a popular tactic in vilification campaigns – whether in Venezuela, Malaysia, Ecuador, or Russia.

A large number of countries also require actors receiving foreign funding, as well as foreign organizations operating within their countries, to disclose their proposed activities and to seek approval (Algeria, Ethiopia, Jordan, Nepal, and Turkmenistan) or to have them conducted through state channels from the outset. These restrictions are further aggravated by report-

ing obligations that are onerous in nature and not guided by any legitimate interest in transparency or accountability (Indonesia, India, and Bangladesh).

Increasingly, the registration process is being placed within the remit of national security agencies or ministries. In China, a new law regulating foreign NGOs stipulates that sovereignty will rest with the Ministry of Public Security and not with the Ministry of Civil Affairs, which is responsible for the registration of Chinese NGOs.

Cambodia rushed an NGO law through parliament in the summer of 2015, forbidding all activities that endanger the peace, stability, public order, culture, or traditions of the country. This wording is characteristic of virtually every new NGO law. They either restrict political activity or ban it altogether, and NGOs are prohibited from any activities viewed as violating the “public order and security” or national interests. Such deliberately vague phrasing opens the floodgates to capricious interpretation and arbitrary enforcement. In many countries, national security and the war on terror are used as a pretense to gag or ban democratic organizations. This general suspicion has taken on an extreme form in Egypt, where we can now speak of a military dictatorship that leaves no leeway for any form of critical civil society initiatives. The situation today is worse than under the regime of Hosni Mubarak, which, at least, left gray zones and maneuvering room for human rights activists and other critical minds.

Protests nipped in the bud

Autocratic countries strive to nip any form of organizing and public protest in the bud. NGO laws are not the only legislative measures that restrict civil society’s space for action: domestic security laws, anti-terrorism laws, media laws – all of these entail restrictions on the action of civil society actors, social movements, journalists, bloggers, and critical professional associations.

In democratic or partially democratic countries, we can increasingly observe that the entire bundle of legal, administrative, and repressive measures undertaken by governments primarily targets social movements and NGOs that oppose large-scale projects (such as the developing of coal, oil, or gas reserves) as well as land grabbing or other infrastructure projects. In many countries, it is a matter of both – of repelling any claims to democratic participation and of deterring protests against the “development model” so as not to endanger the political and economic power of the elites. Governmental fear of citizens’ participation and protest is immense. The loss of political power is the major threat. All too often, defending this power goes hand in hand with the safeguarding of economic interests. Here, protests against land grabbing and large-scale projects are “unwelcome.”

Opposition to funding from abroad is then used as a pretense; it stokes specifically nationalistic resentment and is designed to distract from these economic and political agendas. Garcia Linera, Bolivia’s vice president, denounced domestic think tanks and NGOs as being representatives of the “imperial environmental discourse.” The revocation of Greenpeace India’s license can be interpreted as a declaration of war by India’s government against all those who oppose the Indian development and growth model. Isolating national activists from external cash flows and digital connections is one thing; prosecuting and subjecting them to intelligence surveillance in their own country another: these two combined not only lead to shrinking spaces for NGOs but can even shut them down completely.

In some of our partner countries, this strategy has long since proven to be effective. In Russia, the vast majority of human rights activists have been robbed of their primary sources of funding. Many NGOs – whether in Kenya or India – are already disbanding. Those with critical minds are going into exile (Ethiopia, Egypt). Those partnered with NGOs or foundations are withdrawing for fear of being harassed or criminalized (China). The political climate has taken a dramatic turn for the worse for NGOs in numerous countries. Their denunciation as

agents of the West or as neo-colonists is enmeshed in a context in which the nationalist card is a means of securing power.

Where does this sense of threat emanate from?

An increasing number of governments perceive NGOs as an extension of Western governments, as a danger for political, economic, and social control over their own country. Katja Drinhausen and Günter Schucher from the German Institute for Global and Area Studies (GIGA) explain this shift as a reaction to the foreign policy pursued by US president George W. Bush, the interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq (regime change), and the West's declarations of solidarity with the color revolutions in Georgia, Ukraine, and Central Asia, as well as the revolutions in the Middle East from 2011 onwards.

Governments justify their resistance to external democracy assistance above all by championing their country's sovereignty – a key category in international law and a source of great emotional resonance in many countries as a result of their struggles for independence. From this perspective, democracy aid is viewed as an illegitimate intervention into the internal affairs of another state. The nightmare scenarios associated with the “color revolutions” – named for symbolic colors or fragrant plants – which led to regime change in the early 2000s are a major contributing factor here.

We are very concerned about developments of this nature. Sounding out the political space for action in a difficult environment is just one of the core activities of a political foundation. Weighing these requires having tact, sensitivity, and a willingness to assume responsibility when gauging whether the safety of cooperation partners and staff can be ensured. This sometimes means remaining in the country despite all the resistance encountered there and supporting civil society actors for as long as possible. At times, however, it also entails having to accept the consequences and withdraw from a country if the space for

action has shrunk to zero. It is for this reason that the Heinrich Böll Foundation withdrew from Ethiopia towards the end of 2012.

What's next?

The fact that critical voices campaigning on behalf of human rights and the rule of law, as well as LGBTI rights and an economic policy geared towards social and ecological justice, meet with the disapproval of those in power is nothing new. What is new, however, is the massive and shameless way in which the authorities are taking action against these voices – a development that shows no sign of abating and may even worsen. For this reason, the massive restrictions imposed on the space afforded to civil society organizations must be placed on the political agenda. The freedoms of speech, assembly, and association are the essence of any democracy. Their restriction poses a challenge to democratic governments and global cooperation. This issue must become part of foreign and development policy as well as human rights discussions, taken up by national parliaments and integrated globally into intergovernmental discussions and negotiations.

→ **Barbara Unmüßig** is president
of the Heinrich Böll Foundation.



Young Muscovites at an opposition rally Photo: Vladimir Varfolomeev

“Foreign agents” and “softer aggression”

“Foreign agents” and “softer aggression”

A new NGO law was introduced in Russia in 2006 and amended in 2012, shortly after Vladimir Putin returned to power in the Kremlin, stipulating that every organization that “received money from abroad” and “was politically active” was obliged to register as a “foreign agent.” Since virtually none of them complied with this obligation, the law was amended again in 2014 to permit the state to register an organization in this list against its will. As a consequence, those not labeling their materials with the term “foreign agent,” a phrase that most people in Russia associate with spies and enemies, can expect to be hit with a huge fine. Since 2015, it is also possible for foreign NGOs to be declared “undesirable.” A total of twelve (largely US) organizations have been added to the “patriotic stop list” by the Federation Council, the upper house of Russia’s Federal Assembly. The Council claimed that their activities showed signs of “mild aggression” against Russia. According to the chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee, Konstantin Kosachev, these foundations are solely interested in priming people for mass street protests that they can activate “when

they decide the time has come.” The National Endowment for Democracy was the first NGO to be virtually expelled by the Russian attorney general in late July 2015.

“This reprehensible practice is also catching on in Europe: since 2014, the government in Hungary has been taking action against organizations that receive financial support from ‘EEA and Norway Grants,’ funds that oppose social and economic inequality in Eastern Europe.”

China evidently also perceives the presence of foreign civil society organizations as a security risk – a fifth column threatening social stability and perhaps even the longevity of China’s government. The



Protests in Budapest against the Orbán government, October 2014 Photo: Ronan Shenhav

National People's Congress adopted the "Law on the Management of Foreign Non-Governmental Organizations' Activities within Mainland China" on 28 April 2016. The law stipulates that foreign NGOs are required to register with the security authorities, which are responsible for administration and oversight. Moreover, foreign organizations will require a domestic so called "professional supervisory unit" that is to be held accountable for every activity undertaken by the international NGOs. All "political and illegal religious activities" are to be forbidden, as well as activities that "threaten China's security" and "national and ethnic unity" or that "harm societal public interests." The deliberately vague wording of the definitions and content leaves plenty of scope for arbitrary interpretation. With the law, which will enter into force on 1 January 2017, Chinese organizations would no longer be allowed to receive money from foreign organizations if their offices or their activities have not been registered and approved.

"Defamatory rhetoric is deployed with the specific aim of discrediting the work of NGOs critical of the government."

Smaller countries have been equally swift in making it clear that they will not tolerate any "color revolutions": there will be "no rose, orange, or even banana revolution," the president of Belarus, Alexander Lukashenko, who is still in office today, was

quoted as saying in 2005. Ethiopia's president Meles Zenawi also held a television address to announce that there will be no rose or green revolution in Ethiopia and proceeded to push through a law in 2009 prohibiting politically active NGOs from acquiring more than ten percent of their funding from abroad. An open political landscape has ceased to exist in the country. All 547 members of parliament elected in 2015 belong to the ruling political party, the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF).

This reprehensible practice is also catching on in Europe: since 2014, the government in Hungary has been taking action against organizations that receive financial support from "EEA and Norway Grants," funds that oppose social and economic inequality in Eastern Europe and are primarily provided by Norway. In July 2014, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán warned against "political activists who are getting paid from abroad" and who are "advancing foreign interests in Hungary." Defamatory rhetoric is deployed with the specific aim of discrediting the work of NGOs critical of the government. In 2014, the governmental agency KEHI launched a criminal probe into NGOs that had either received financial aid from Norway or passed it on to Hungarian NGOs, including numerous reputable organizations such as the Ökotárs Foundation. ■■

Rising powers, rising democracies – Rising democracy promotion?

An outlook on non-Western democracy assistance

An essay by Oliver Stuenkel

Democracy promotion remains an area that has been traditionally dominated by the United States and Europe on both the policy and the academic level. However, the fact that we are witnessing a shift of power away from the West and towards so-called “emerging powers” such as China and India raises the important question of the ways in which democracy promotion – and democracy itself – will be affected by this trend.

Indeed, some argue that autocrats across the world may become increasingly unwilling to tolerate European and US-financed organizations that openly promote democracy abroad. The West may lose the legitimacy it needs to finance the promotion of democracy and rights in other countries, while autocracies no longer face political risks for expelling foreign-financed organizations.

From a Western point of view, so-called “rising democracies” such as India, Indonesia, South Africa and Brazil – all of which have sought greater international visibility over the past years – seem to be ideal candidates to assist the United States and Europe in promoting democracy in a “post-Western world.”

Historically, however, they have been reluctant to embrace this idea and remain deeply ambiguous about the liberal pedigree that informs Western democracy promotion. ¶

¶ Notice

Although this text refers to Western democracy promotion, programs financed by European countries tend to generate fewer negative reactions in policy debates. This may be because European democracy programs adopt

a less confrontational approach – symbolized by German foundations – but also due to the fact that the United States’ involvement in the Global South is usually more controversial.

Policy makers in Jakarta, Brasília, Delhi, and Pretoria generally agree that democracy is the most desirable form of government and often openly commit themselves to defending universally conceived values and helping all human beings obtain political rights and representation. Yet at the same time, these countries frequently complain that international liberal norms are instruments that enable the great powers to project their influence and advance their own interests.

Western powers are commonly viewed as being willing to promote democracy only if doing so reflects their strategic or economic interests. Critics point out that the United States promotes democracy because democratic regimes are more likely to trade with the United States and become integrated into the US-led global system, thus rendering them less likely to cause instability. Whenever democracy promotion collides with economic or geopolitical interests, however, democracy becomes a secondary issue. Thus, to many people in the Global South, democracy promotion is a tool used to legitimize US hegemony, and this is said to explain the West's highly selective support of demonstrations and coup d'états around the world. Western leaders often criticize Brazil, India, and other democracies for being soft on dictators and view such countries as irresponsible and unwilling to take action when democracy or human rights are under threat. Yet despite its principled rhetoric, the United States, as observers in Brazil often remember, was quick to embrace illegitimate post-coup leaders in Venezuela (2002), Honduras (2009) and Egypt (2013), and has actively supported repressive governments when they have used force against protest movements, for example, in Bahrain.

Despite these qualms, emerging democracies have frequently played a constructive role and defended democratic norms during the past decade. Brazil, for example, has quietly become a relatively reliable supporter of democracy in the region, even though its low-key approach has been criticized at home and abroad. When compared to other rising democracies, Brazil has taken a number of principled stances, dissuading dissatisfied generals from staging coups (for example, in Par-

aguay) and ensuring that democratic clauses were integrated into agreements made by Mercosur and UNASUR, two regional organizations. Brazil also announced the concept of “non-indifference,” an informal regional policy doctrine that underlines the country’s regional leadership ambitions.

Although Brazil’s policy has been relatively clear in terms of political ruptures in the region, the country has generally not taken a forceful stance on violations of human rights and civil liberties. In early 2014, when the Venezuelan government cracked down on protesters with unacceptable severity, Brazil’s foreign minister insisted that it was not Brazil’s role to criticize Venezuelan president Nicolás Maduro. In the same vein, Brazil’s aid projects are generally free of human rights constraints or political conditions. Cuba, for example, is an important recipient of Brazilian aid, but no political strings are attached to Brazilian investment projects in Cuba.

Outside its own region, Brazil’s stance has often been ambiguous; this has been the case with the civil war in Syria and with Russia’s unlawful annexation of Crimea. From Brazil’s perspective, external pressure is rarely the most constructive approach, and the country is therefore reluctant to openly identify and excoriate violations of international law. Brazil also strongly opposes military interventions aimed at addressing humanitarian crises. Very similar things can be said about other non-Western democracies.

By contrast, India, the world’s largest democracy, has been more reluctant to promote democracy. For over a decade, Delhi has followed a policy of “constructive engagement” with Myanmar’s military junta, which has led the country to avoid criticizing the regime’s human rights abuses, despite the fact that India hosts large numbers of Burmese refugees and political exiles. Foreign policy analyst Raja Mohan argues that “democracy as a political priority has been largely absent from India’s foreign

policy.”¹ This may be partly explained by the fact that India is surrounded by unstable and often autocratic regimes. The Indian government sees itself as having no choice but to engage with its autocratic neighbors and is skeptical that outside factors could democratize China, its largest neighbor. The growing Chinese presence was also one of the main reasons that the Indian government was unwilling to openly condemn the military regime in Rangoon for its suppression of the Saffron Revolution in 2007.

Nevertheless, Indian policy makers frequently express their commitment to democracy promotion, particularly in multilateral forums. In 2005, Indian prime minister Manmohan Singh argued that “liberal democracy is the natural order of political organization in today’s world,” saying that “all alternative systems ... are an aberration.”² He also stated that as the world’s largest democracy, it was natural that India should have been among the first to welcome and support the concept of a UN Democracy Fund.

India participated in the first ministerial conference of the Community of Democracies organized in Warsaw in June 2000; yet, rather than genuinely promoting democracy, India saw the initiative as a means of strengthening ties between itself and the United States. This episode should serve as a warning to the West: Non-Western democracies are proud of their political systems and their values, but they do not divide the world into democracies and autocracies, and they are very skeptical of any policies or initiatives based on this world view.

Similar to other regional powers with global aspirations, South Africa sees itself as an important actor in regional stability and development. The promotion of democracy in Africa has been one of the pillars of South African foreign policy since the country’s democratization. As early as the mid-1990s, Nelson Mandela set out his priorities for South African foreign policy: human rights, democracy promotion, and international

¹ Publication

Raja C. Mohan (2007): “Balancing Interests and Values: India’s Struggle with Democracy Promotion,” in: *The Washington Quarterly*, Sommer 2007, S. 99–115

² Publication

Ibid.

law. Mandela argued that human rights were the cornerstone of South Africa's policy and that he would not hesitate to carry the message to the far corners of the world. Moreover, he promised that human rights would be "the light that guides our foreign affairs." ↗ Western observers at the time hoped South Africa would play a leading role in promoting democracy abroad. And indeed, Mandela's release from prison in 1990 transformed South Africa and contributed to a wave of democratic revolutions across the continent. In the decade that followed multiparty elections were organized in more than thirty African countries – countries that had previously been dictatorships. The narrative of South Africa's journey from apartheid to democratic rainbow nation provided inspiration at a time when the African continent was otherwise wracked by conflict and economic decline. However, despite Pretoria's rhetoric, South Africa's efforts to promote democracy have been characterized by contradictions and dilemmas that have led the government to modify its approach.

Mandela's successor, Thabo Mbeki, emphasized South Africa's international engagement and actively sought to promote peaceful resolutions to conflicts, such as contributing peace-keeping troops to UN missions in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Central African Republic. Under the current president Jacob Zuma, South Africa has continued to adopt a relatively visible international role, but the country has been severely criticized by the international community for not doing enough to defend democracy in neighboring Zimbabwe and for not placing pressure on the political leadership in Swaziland to organize free and fair elections. However, it is also important to note that promoting and defending democracy in Africa during the last few decades has been a far harder task than in other regions such as Latin America. Internationally, South Africa's ambiguous role in the field of democracy and human rights was symbolized by its initial support of UN Security Council

↗ Link

Thomas Carothers und Richard Youngs (2011):
Looking for Help: Will Rising Democracies
Become International Democracy Supporters?

Carnegie Endowment for International Peace:
[http://carnegieendowment.org/files/Rising_](http://carnegieendowment.org/files/Rising_democracies_final.pdf)
[democracies_final.pdf](http://carnegieendowment.org/files/Rising_democracies_final.pdf)

Resolution 1973, which authorized a humanitarian intervention in Libya, before becoming the NATO campaign's greatest critic immediately thereafter.

Indonesia, the world's largest Muslim country and a vibrant democracy, has increasingly been aspiring to a regional leadership position; however, it also faces similar constraints to India and South Africa. In 2013, Indonesian president Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono disregarded a long-standing foreign policy tradition of noninterference in the affairs of other nations – one of the chief principles that developed out of the Asian-African Conference in Bandung in 1955 – and called on Syrian president Bashar al-Assad to step down. This demand was important, even though Indonesia has done little to follow up its initiative and later abstained from condemning Assad in the UN General Assembly. In several instances, Indonesia has assumed regional leadership in democracy promotion in a similar manner to Brazil. Jakarta has also made specific efforts to encourage Myanmar to begin the transition from dictatorship to democracy.

The Bali Democracy Forum (BDF), established in 2008, is another medium through which Indonesia has promoted international norms of democracy, although Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Iran regularly participate in the forum and rarely face overt criticism. The Institute for Peace and Democracy (IPD) – created in the same year as the BDF – supports the BDF's goal of furthering concepts and skills for peace and democracy through intellectual exchanges, training practitioners, developing joint missions, network building, publications, and capacity building.

The notion that democracy is the ideal political system forms part of public discussions in all of the countries described above. Many young citizens are helping these countries to adapt to the ever-changing realities – for example by discussing ideas such as “digital democracy.” Democracy is as much an Indian – or Brazilian, Indonesian and South African – value as a Western one, and this convergence of values could provide a key foundation for a strong partnership. However, given their profound doubts about Western intentions and memories of foreign in-

tervention, the reluctance of emerging powers to cooperate has often led to disappointment in the West.

The best way forward between Western and non-Western democracies, therefore, is to keep cooperation in the field of democracy to practical and technical matters. Ideally, the term democracy promotion should be used as little as possible when engaging with emerging democracies, as it evokes images of the United States' intervention in Iraq in 2003 and other imperialist episodes. Asking Brazil, India and South Africa to join Europe in confronting Russia, for example, is bound to fail; indeed, these three countries not only refused to impose sanctions in the aftermath of the annexation of Crimea, they also issued a joint statement condemning attempts to “push Russia against the wall.”

Joint projects could instead be described as “election monitoring,” “transparency initiatives,” and “promoting political participation.” In the same way, preventive work that strengthens democracy indirectly is likely to be less controversial. For example, training journalists and judges or financing NGOs to help promote public debate is something that countries like Brazil and India could be interested in as part of a trilateral framework with European countries. These are all issues that democracies in the Global South care deeply about – just like Western countries.

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Hamburg demonstration in solidarity with the Gezi Park protests in Istanbul Photo: Rasande Tyskar

It is the middle
that matters

It is the middle that matters: Social mobility and democracy



Tourists of the new middle class in Shanghai Photo: Daniel Case

Since Aristotle it has been emphasized again and again that a functioning democracy presumes a relatively large middle class. It is not only a good sign for the fight against poverty that a growing number of people have entered the middle class in the last fifteen years. It could also be a good sign for democratic developments.

“Members of the middle class by no means speak out in favor of democracy always and everywhere.”

Economists define “middle class” based on income. At least 10 US dollars per day (PPP – purchasing power parity, that is, when purchasing power is made comparable among different currencies and countries) has been increasingly asserted as a criterion. For a family of four that is US\$14,600 annually. Anyone who earns less than this amount risks ending up in dire straits should anything unforeseen occur.

The number of people who earn between 10 and 20 US dollars (PPP) per day has grown from 399 million in 2001 to 784 million in 2011, according

to a study by the Pew Research Center in Washington, DC.  The increase was significant, especially in China (203 million), Mexico and South America (a total of 63 million), and Eastern Europe (39 million). In India (the increase according to the Pew Research Center was 17 million, but other studies have calculated a much higher figure) and most Asian countries, as well as in Africa, the situation has also progressed, but more slowly.

With regard to democratic orientation, sociological criteria are more telling: level of education, professional status, and possession of long-lasting consumer goods and/or a residence. Anyone with this sort of security is more likely to be interested in post-material things, such as the common good, good governance, or issues of public health and the environment. These groups have supported many of the protests and movements against authoritarian rulers and for more democracy, as well as for a state oriented toward the welfare of its citizens: in the protests in the Arab world (against authoritarian regimes), in Southern Europe (against material poverty and the old parties), in Turkey (against development at any cost and authoritarian paternal-

Publication

Rakesh Kochhar (2015): A Global Middle Class Is More Promise than Reality: From 2001 to 2011, Nearly	700 Million Step Out of Poverty, but Most Only Barely, Pew Research Center, Washington, D.C.
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Spotlight – It is the middle that matters

Hamburg fights for Istanbul: The middle-class protest goes global Photo: Rasande Tyskar

- ▶ ism), in Hong Kong (for democratic elections), and in Brazil (against prestige projects and for good public services).

But members of the middle class by no means speak out in favor of democracy always and everywhere. Sometimes they are satisfied with prosperity (Turkey), let their desire for freedom and participation be eclipsed by economic progress (China), feel loyalty to the government policies that led to their social advancement (South Africa), align themselves against the rise of a “new” middle class (Brazil), or are co-opted into the system through a nationalist pathos (Russia). In Thailand middle-class citizens have allied themselves with old representatives (royalists, military), because they fear corrupt politicians and a patronage system through which tax revenues finance populist programs aimed at winning the poor vote. In other countries as well, middle classes have spoken out for the removal of elected governments.

“Once the middle class reaches a critical mass, at least one third or, even better, half of the population, there are good prospects for a stable, democratic form of government that truly serves the citizens and respects their rights.”

The urban middle classes no longer automatically turn a sympathetic ear to the very concrete causes championed by social movements (such as the Landless Workers’ Movement MST in Brazil), sometimes undermining the latter’s prospects of success. The demonstrators on Tahrir Square were unable to create an alliance with the peasants and working class. They then had no alternative but to welcome the military coup against the Muslim Brotherhood, which had won the election.

As regards their ideas about democracy, the urban middle classes often see themselves and poorer groups as belonging to different camps. People with low incomes frequently have more crucial immediate problems to deal with, or they see their desire for stability and order best taken care of by authoritarian rulers, whereas those whose lives are economically stable can afford to embrace a longer-term perspective, specific issues, and identity politics. Turkey is one example of a divided middle class. Whereas the vast majority of its members living in rural areas cheer on Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the urban Gezi Park demonstrators complain of corruption, measures taken against any and all opposition, and state interference in their everyday lives.

Nevertheless, as even Aristotle recognized, stability and good governance are greatly dependent on the size of the middle class. If it is too small there is a danger that members will remain submissive or ally with anti-democratic forces because they fear “the poor masses.” Once the middle class reaches a crit-

ical mass, at least one third or, even better, half of the population, there are good prospects for a stable, democratic form of government that truly serves the citizens and respects their rights. “Middle-class societies, as opposed to societies with a middle class, are the bedrock of democracy” (Francis Fukuyama).

But what happens to democracy if the middle class stagnates or starts shrinking? In various Latin American countries in recent years, not only did the middle class grow, but inequality also declined. Now, as growth falters and the resource-exporting model reveals its inherent weakness, discontent grows; in cases of corruption, popular anger also rises. Because the new middle classes have no crisis resilience whatsoever (that is, no capacity to endure in difficult situations) and the governments can no longer counter the discontent of the people through gifts and compensations, the protests against the political system generally increase (Brazil, Chile).

In the middle-class societies in Europe, as well, the future of liberal democracy will depend on the answers they find to the increasing inequality, for example, what can be offered to those who are losers (or feel that way) in a “winner-take-all society” – a term coined by US economists Robert H. Frank and Philip J. Cook. In Southern Europe a large segment of the young feel robbed of a future in their own country. In all societies millions of people perform poorly paid jobs and can participate only to a limited extent, whereas professional salaries, honoraria, and gratuities have, in contrast, risen to grotesque levels. The banking crisis, the debt crisis, and the euro crisis also threaten the prosperity of the middle class, which increasingly has the sense that elections no longer offer them any real alternatives. ■■

“How green is the new global middle class?” – Brazil and India in comparison



Advertising for platinum jewelry in India
Photo: Ashley Bristowe

What exactly is the new middle class in the emerging countries, and does it have any potential for implementing green policies? These questions were discussed by participants from NGOs, the media, and universities at a two-day seminar in New Delhi in April 2015, hosted by the Brazil and India offices of the Heinrich Böll Foundation in collaboration with the Indian partner organization Development Alternatives.

A look at the statistics and survey responses reveals how much the “new” middle classes in emerging countries differ from one another. India’s middle class is disproportionately well educated, is overflowing with self-confidence, and has positive expectations for the future, even though the income and standard of living for many people in India – including those who consider themselves middle class – is clearly below the level in the other BRICS countries (Brazil, Russia, China, and South Africa). In Brazil, on the other hand, both doubts and protest are growing – after the years of the boom. The “new middle class” was an explicit “political project” of the Lula government (2003–2011); it proved to be indebted and fragile when the economic crisis struck. The former “working poor” lack elements that are typical of a middle class, such as higher formal education, financial savings, and also social contacts in the “proper circles.” These are important factors that facilitate survival during a crisis without losing social status. Such people have noticeable difficulties paying for privatized services such as education and health. At the same time public expenses for prestigious projects such as the soccer World Cup and the Olympics have given rise to angry protests.

What defines the culture and lifestyle of the new middle classes? Consumerism serves in many respects as their defining characteristic: regular shopping sprees at the local mall as well as motor vehicle and home ownership. This often means going into debt, as savings and assets tend to be minimal. Gainful employment in the formal sector is typical, also and especially among women. In Brazil, howe-

ver, a segment of the new middle classes continues to work in the informal sector.

The consumer orientation of the new middle classes is understandable for segments of the population that have recently stepped out of poverty, but it is certainly not sustainable. In Brazil criticism of this comes mostly from the political left, which also criticizes the seduction of advertising. In India, the Gandhi tradition of simplicity and self-restraint continues to be present as well, providing a counterbalance to consumerism in the minds of many members of the middle class. In Brazil, being part of the middle class also involves membership in one of the numerous new religious congregations (mostly Protestant), which preach the ethics of morality and work, thereby viewing material success as an individual reward and not as a social obligation. The middle class is cautious, oriented toward social advancement, and believes in the strength of hard work.

At the same time, however, among some members of the new middle classes in the emerging countries there is evidence of a growing awareness that there are social and ecological limits to a consumer society. Some typical issues of middle-class political protest are: opposition to pollution “in our own backyard” or to corruption by public employees. There are alternative projects of all kinds that are run in particular by young people, often well-educated, which raise awareness about the environment and social responsibility. And there are examples of growing pressure on businesses to offer more ecologically sustainable products. Aside from their much-bemoaned consumer orientation, the new global middle class has a potential for “green issues” – even if a “green political movement” has been hardly visible so far. A political project is evidently needed to help the new middle classes become champions of democracy and sustainability. ■■

The genie is out of the bottle: The new protest movements in India are the political coming-out of the urban middle class

Huge masses of people push their way through the streets of New Delhi, a sea of protest signs rising above the heads of the demonstrators. Water cannons and heavily armed police units block their path. A young woman is enraged at the police blockade and their water cannons and holds her placard up to a camera: "You can get raped but not protest against rape." Others demand: "Hang rapists," or simply declaim: "Shame!" It is these pictures of the angry protests that went around the world following an inconceivably brutal gang rape in December 2012.

It was the second large mass protest of this kind that flooded India's major cities. There had already been a wave of popular rage against corruption, as well as many smaller actions, such as one demanding greater transparency. This kind of protest movement is a brand-new actor on the political stage of a country that is considered the world's largest democracy. Demonstrations are no longer organized for particular interests, but for issues that affect all Indians as individuals, regardless of caste and class.

Who are these seemingly unorganized demonstrators and what is the significance of these new urban protests? The India office of the Heinrich Böll Foundation in New Delhi funded a study entitled "New Citizens' Activism in India" in 2013, which for the first time analyzed what is behind the new forms of action and what changes are being ushered in. ↗

"The protests are a phenomenon of the 'urban street,'" says the author of the study, Richa Singh of the Center for Democracy and Social Action (CDSA), the partner of the Böll Foundation. "Internet and the social media make it very easy to network." But the people who network for a common goal on Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp are not people you might expect to suddenly feel the urge to engage in political activism: the middle class.

A tenet of political science holds that the more educated people are, the more likely they are to vote. "India disproves that," according to Singh. The greatest voter turnout in India is in rural regions and among the poor. The major parties recruit their voting masses there, with election gifts and mobilization efforts. The middle class avoided the polling

places for decades out of lack of interest. The political parties had and have nothing to offer this constituency. "The middle class exercised its power with other means – through economic influence, cultural hegemony, and control within the state," says Singh.

In the meantime, however, India's middle class has not only grown enormously through the economic advancement of the country, but it has also become far more heterogeneous. "There are in fact a number of different middle classes," according to the democracy researcher. Their needs and interests have changed.

"Many people in the up-and-coming Indian middle class cannot relate to the present party system," said Axel Harneit-Sievers, head of the Heinrich Böll Foundation in India. "The streets of the major cities offer this new class of people – especially young people – space and a platform for the new forms and issues of their protests."

From these protests emerged a new political party, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP). It has achieved surprising election results, but also suffered setbacks. Since February 2015 it runs the government in Delhi and pursues a socially oriented political style, though it is often criticized as "populist." It caters primarily to the members of the urban lower and lower middle classes.

The surprising winner of the national elections in spring 2014 was very clearly the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) under Narendra Modi. Modi's campaign promises – for economic growth and against corruption – appealed particularly to the middle classes and young people.

All of this can only have a vitalizing impact on Indian democracy, which had been gridlocked. The new protest movements have influenced the politics of the political parties and they are also bringing into play new visions of democracy – grassroots, more vibrant, and more independent than previously. This will bring lasting change to the political agenda in India. The genie is out of the bottle. ■■

3

Concrete Work
for Democracy

Democracy must be fought for and renewed – The Heinrich Böll Foundation’s work for democracy abroad

Democracy cannot be taken for granted. It has to be fought for, revitalized, and renewed. Supporting and assisting democracy and democratization globally is a central focus of the Heinrich Böll Foundation’s international work. Throughout the world, people are standing up for democracy; for political, economic, and cultural rights; and for a democratically organized polity. Surveys show that democracy is the preferred form of government for people all over the world.

A quick look at the political map shows the extent to which baseline conditions can differ among the nations of world. What can the Heinrich Böll Foundation, with its political concerns and values, accomplish as a foreign foundation? Is there enough maneuvering room to work with partners? There is no blueprint to determine this; the selection of cooperating partners and of the instruments and levels of action is always specific to the countries involved. It therefore requires enormous knowledge and political sensitivity in dealing with countries and cultures. Who are the protagonists of change? Who has resources and access to societal forces, to political decision-makers prepared to assist processes of democracy? Who is excluded from the democratic processes of opinion-making and decision-making? As a rule, each intervention by the Heinrich Böll Foundation is preceded a comprehensive analysis of the political and social parameters and thus of the obstacles to and potentials for democratization. For the foundation, this always means a detailed analysis of gender-political realities, for example, and of the different political and economic opportunities available to men and women.

The Heinrich Böll Foundation works in democracies of the North (such as the United States and the countries of Western and Eastern Europe), in democracies of the South (such as India, Brazil, and South Africa), in transitional countries (such as Tunisia and Myanmar), and in authoritarian states (such as Russia and China). The foundation is also present in a series of conflict and post-conflict regions such as Afghanistan and in countries of the Middle East, in order to support the processes of democratization, peace, and reconciliation that have emerged internally within the respective societies.

Concrete democracy assistance

A distinction is made in the relevant literature between direct and indirect democracy assistance. Direct democracy assistance is aimed at political procedures and decision-making processes. These include observing elections, strengthening political parties, professionalizing parliaments, and institutionalizing opportunities for participation by civil society. Democratic decision-making processes, the participation of citizens, and the legitimation of politicians are the centers of focus here.

Indirect democracy assistance seeks to establish parameters for improved government leadership, so-called good governance. This occurs by strengthening capacities, by reforming ministerial bureaucracies, and by building up important institutions (for example, courts of auditors and the police). At the same time, indirect democracy assistance generally aims at improving governmental capacities, at increasing the transparency of state institutions, and at supporting reforms that raise the living conditions of the population, especially marginalized population groups. Many classic programs of development cooperation – such as literacy campaigns – contribute indirectly to democracy assistance because they establish the prerequisites for participation.

In practice, of course, the direct and indirect aspects of democracy assistance often overlap, for instance, when groups in civil society are supported in developing strategies to combat corruption at the state level and in discussing these strategies in public.

The central focus of the Heinrich Böll Foundation’s work for democracy is direct democracy assistance. Here the foundation cooperates with very diverse actors, primarily from civil society. In the S@utiMtaani project in Kenya, for example, young citizens have been helped to communicate with their political representatives. The Heinrich Böll Foundation supports the political participation of both

genders, especially women, as illustrated by the engagement of the Women's Parliamentary Caucus in Pakistan. And it fights for the rights of minorities and people who face discrimination because of their sexual orientation and gender identity, as an example from the South Caucasus shows ("Courageously opposing the majority," pp. 72).

Human rights, democracy, and sustainability – this is the triad that characterizes the work of the Heinrich Böll Foundation both nationally and internationally. The strengths of the Heinrich Böll Foundation lie in its ability to connect social, gender-political, and ecological concerns to a democratic approach. Participation and rights are the constants here. With issues such as access to resources, land, and water, or sexual and reproductive rights, the foundation's focus is always on basic democratic principles, on democratic control and accountability, and on an independent judiciary in which rights can be asserted through legal action.

Organizing the democratic participation of civil societies – and wherever possible also working with parliaments – is a goal that runs through the majority of the Heinrich Böll Foundation's programs. In order to promote a strong and independent civil society, partner organizations are also supported institutionally. Occasionally, however, nonpublic spaces are also needed: protected spaces for participants, sites for contemplation as well as for strategizing and networking.

Partners and addressees

For the Heinrich Böll Foundation, cooperation with its partners is a central element of successful and effective long-term engagement. When the foundation is a guest in a country, it follows the principle of working through and with local democratic forces on social reforms and political discourses. Knowledge, access, influence, networks, and funds, but also solidarity are shared. This legitimizes the work and establishes political sustainability – in contrast to the paternalistic approaches of other external players. Partners are essential for the work of the Heinrich Böll Foundation. It needs their analyses of the political situation and their anchoring in the society. Thus partnership, the basis of all cooperation by the Heinrich Böll Foundation, is a fundamental principle.

The Heinrich Böll Foundation works primarily with reform-oriented individuals and groups from civil society. These include small nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) – for example, Nahnoo in Lebanon – that fight for public space as an important element of democratic societies, organizations such as The Inner Circle in Cape Town, which supports homosexual Muslims in their quest to harmonize their sexual orientation and gender identity with their faith, social movements such as MODATIMA (Movimiento de Defensa por el Acceso al Agua, la Tierra y la Protección del Medio Ambiente) in Chile, which

works for water rights, as well as Internet activists such as the Social Media Champions from the Follow the Money campaign in Nigeria. And of course this also includes institutions such as think tanks, research institutes, and legal organizations. Other political actors – parliamentarians, political par-

"Human rights, democracy, and sustainability – this is the triad that characterizes the work of the Heinrich Böll Foundation both nationally and internationally."

ties, commissions, and public administrations – also play a role in the foundation's work, whenever this fits with a particular objective. It is can be difficult to find pro-democracy elites at the various levels of political action, for instance, in parliament; the Heinrich Böll Foundation also frequently tries to identify nonpartisan parliamentarians who share a thematic concern, such as fighting violence against women or promoting renewable, decentralized energy sources. In several cases, the Heinrich Böll Foundation has also worked as an independent player, developing its own formats as well as programs for dialogue and networking. This also includes analyzing contemporary political developments and reporting about them back in Germany.

As a foundation with close ties to a political party, the Green Party, the Heinrich Böll Foundation supports other political parties and cooperates with them. Functional and competitive political parties are key components of democracies and crucial institutions of democratization. Through them, citizens are able to participate in political decision-making. At the same time, however, it is extremely difficult to establish stable parties and party systems that actually promote the development and consolidation of democracy. In any event and for good reasons, political foundations are not allowed to directly finance political parties, to provide funds to functionaries, or to actively participate in election campaigns. There are, nevertheless, legitimate ways to strengthen political parties and party systems, for instance, by supporting a political party with similar ideological positions through advising and support (the partisan approach), by cooperating with several political parties (the multiparty approach), or by supporting the civil society milieu surrounding a political party (the civil society approach).

Analyzing democratic relations and the institutions and people that influence them is a continuous task for the Heinrich Böll Foundation. As a foundation closely allied with a political party, it has to place itself repeatedly in the (ambivalent) role that parties play in establishing and securing democracies – and must choose which strategies and approaches the foundation can and wants to pursue in assisting and

cooperating with political parties. In reality the possibilities available to the Heinrich Böll Foundation are often limited. For example, assistance according to the so-called partisan approach presupposes the existence of a "sister party" that is socially anchored, democratically organized, and shares the foundation's socio-political ideas and values. This is rarely the case – especially outside of Europe. Possibilities, however, emerge in other places. Strengthening Green movements and parties in Central and Eastern Europe and networking with them, for example, is a central focus of the Heinrich Böll Foundation's office in Prague. In cooperation with the Green European Foundation (GEF) and the Czech Green Academy (Zelená akademie), joint events and seminars have been organized that increase the visibility of Green actors and issues in the region. In Pakistan, the Heinrich Böll Foundation supports the Women's Parliamentary Caucus, an informal group of female parliamentarians who seek a consensus on gender-relevant issues beyond party lines and positions and who work to increase women's participation in legal and political decision-making (see "Half the sky," pp. 72). Wherever the Heinrich Böll Foundation cooperates selectively with political parties and parliamentarians, various points in common can be identified.

As a political foundation, the Heinrich Böll Foundation often helps to cross boundaries and create links between civil society, political parties, and parliament. It is able to work in areas where the government has little or no presence. And, conversely, the foundation can also serve as a bridge from society into politics and can help create political space. That is something highly valued by its cooperating partners.

Difficulties on the ground

Political processes at the local, national, and international levels are now more interconnected than ever and produce interdependencies. Climate change is also local, and international climate policy has local effects. International trade agreements can have a negative influence on local markets. International legal frameworks such the Convention to Eliminate All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) collide with national legislations and realities. And not infrequently in young democracies, the national and capital-city oriented politics diverges widely from that of rural regions.

The art is to create connections among these levels, taking into consideration the interdependencies of political processes. This is precisely what the Heinrich Böll Foundation does, as well as – wherever politically reasonable and feasible – seeking to promote exchanges and alliances among the players. The Heinrich Böll Foundation has been quite successful in this, especially regarding resource and climate politics and gender politics (on this, see "Without borders: The global participation of civil society,"

pp. 96). In the many cases where the Heinrich Böll Foundation works more on local and national levels than on the international level – either because no international policy area exists or because certain international processes, such as peace negotiations, are not really accessible and cannot be influenced – the foundation focuses on the relevant international processes and developments and establishes connections with the national and local levels.

The political parameters are crucial, always and everywhere. They affect maneuvering room and, more than ever, the partners and target groups. In a number of countries this is a balancing act. The foundation's work for democracy and democratization is an intervention into and a questioning of political power relations. The Heinrich Böll Foundation and its partners are aware of this and always coordinate their actions. It is precisely here that many governments seek to delegitimize these partners and the foundation's work. This is especially – though not exclusively – the case in countries with authoritarian and semi-authoritarian regimes. The art here is to carefully develop the democratic process without endangering the partners and colleagues in the country. ■■

The changing appearance of Nigerian civil society



Share Fair in Abuja, Nigeria
Photo: Partners for Democratic Change

Until 1999 Nigeria had almost always been ruled by the military. It took a lot of courage to fight for democracy. One of the reasons the country finally got a civilian president again was the work of the many NGOs that opposed the military government.

In contrast to the rest of West Africa, almost all NGOs in Nigeria at the time were “homegrown” and received no support from international donors. The heroes were Nigerian. During the years of the democratic renaissance, many Nigerians placed their hopes in the battle-tested media and NGOs. International donors also backed them; a lot of money flowed into the country with the aim of making democracy a living concept. Buoyed by the euphoric mood and supported with funds from abroad, the activists of civil society had a heyday. This made them interesting to the rest of the world. They were invited to events and some of them were even courted by international organizations. But that meant that they were away from Nigeria, where exhaustion, complacency, and a “lack of enemies” diminished the movement’s vigor. In any event, no one was able to do anything against the cancer of widespread corruption.

The NGO scene remained on its set course. The leading figures got older, and a second generation grew up without having to prove itself in battle. From the beginning, this newer generation was more focused on funding, frequently avoiding confrontations on a practical level. When things became interesting, when it was no longer a matter of distributing pamphlets or issuing national declarations, but of concrete projects, they often backed off because they did not want to risk falling out with local governments if matters there were already relatively democratic, that is, if there was information and transparency. Many NGOs became implementation agencies for international donors.

Against this backdrop, a new dynamic arose in early 2012: #OccupyNigeria. The majority of the people who took to the streets in response to the abrupt reduction of gasoline subsidies were not organized in any NGO. On the contrary, they generally suspected organizations of corruption: “Whoever is organized has a budget and thus a structure into which money can be poured, whether it is a government post or one in the private sector” – that was the feeling. Young people also mistrusted the NGOs. The NGOs, for their part, regarded this as an affront (“We know how things work!”)

Thus a gap emerged. “In this situation we preferred to work with the young Nigerians,” says Christine K, director of the Heinrich Böll Foundation’s office in Abuja. “Their ideas were fresh; they wanted change and were very interested in Green solutions as a political alternative. These people included activists, bloggers, professional urban planners, and many others. We found our champions here.”

With this, a process of reorientation began. “In the meantime we have arrived at the point with our new partner organizations where we don’t shy away from confrontation. These partners work primarily in online media, bring facts and numbers to the debate, and discuss concepts. And then they use this knowledge to demand plans and practical steps from the government in order to improve the lives of ordinary citizens.” ■■■

Many ways to assist democracies: Examples from the work of the Heinrich Böll Foundation

Democracy assistance means not only supporting democratic institutions (for example, parliaments) and procedures (free and fair elections), but also supporting civic engagement and promoting a free and open political culture.

The Heinrich Böll Foundation has made universal human rights the central and pivotal issue of its work for democracy. The foundation supports citizen involvement, it organizes public debates, and it fights with its partners for gender equity and the participation of minorities.

A free and open political culture also requires space. For this reason the Heinrich Böll Foundation supports civil society groups and the work of journalists and the media. The foundation also works with its partners to manage conflicts, guide disputes into workable channels, and ensure a balance of interests – so that democracy does not become hollowed out or even break down.

#1 Deliberative democracy: Central locations and forward-looking debates

Democracy assistance requires staying power, especially in countries in which the initial euphoria is quickly replaced by the disappointments of everyday life. But also in states in which reforms are thwarted or stagnate. And especially in societies in which clientelism and corruption have made people cynical about democracy.

The Heinrich Böll Foundation's long years of engagement in many countries can be illustrated by two examples: The monthly Gender Forums in Kenya for gender equity in politics, which have opened new perspectives and anticipated a number of reforms; and the regular debates in Georgia that have become a central site for reflections about reform.

Still going strong: The Gender Forums in Kenya

No, the building is not beautiful, a hotel tower from the 1980s. But the location is good, at the very center of the city and near the University of Nairobi. If you want your events to be well attended, you have to pay attention to these things. Once a month, women and men interested in questions of gender stream into the Nairobi Safari Club at the invitation of the Heinrich Böll Foundation. Not only have the discussion rounds

already become a fixture of the hotel; they are also an institution in Kenya's capital city. The Gender Forums have existed since 2001 and they almost always draw more than one hundred visitors. That's not a feat that is easy to imitate.

The forum brings very different people into the discussion; professors debate with government employees, and both have to respond to critical questions from activists. Depending on the issue, specialists from associations and the private economy are also invited. "No one here has a monopoly on knowledge," says Joan Birika, gender coordinator for the Heinrich Böll Foundation in Nairobi, and "everyone should be able to speak." Even if more experienced people sometimes raise an eyebrow when newcomers proceed a little awkwardly on the unfamiliar terrain.

Over time the Gender Forums have made it clear that almost every social issue is somehow implicated in the (power) relations between the genders. Financial politics, environmental politics, land reform, public riots – even with ostensibly "neutral" issues, gender has to be included in the analysis and the action plan. In doing this, the Gender Forums have brought to government offices and to social groups



Participants at the Forum on Women's Political Leadership, Nairobi, Kenya Photo: Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung

the knowledge amassed and the demands formulated at the United Nations World Conferences on Women (1975, 1980, 1985, and 1995). The third World Conference on Women was held in Nairobi in 1985.

It is thanks to these Gender Forums that there is at least some awareness of this today in government administrations in Kenya. At the same time, the forums also serve as a kind of monitoring authority, issuing invitations to politicians, civil servants, and civic organizations to come and present information about what they are doing about gender equity. And the forums enable interested citizens to participate: after 2006, when the country's constitutional reform stood at the center of the debates, many proposals were discussed with experts at the Gender Forum.

In Kenya, gender politics is not merely another term for the equality of women. Quite a number of men can be found in the audience of the Gender Forums. Kenya has its own men's movement – albeit a modest one – supported by the Heinrich Böll Foundation. Controversial and sensitive issues have also been debated at the forums, such as the rights of sexual minorities and the decriminalization of abortion. Emotions, ignorance, and prejudices frequently collide, but the good conversational culture of the forums has nevertheless survived.

Anyone interested in continued success – and for the Heinrich Böll Foundation that means keeping things moving – has to continue to develop new ideas, even when everything is working well. In Nairobi the planners of the Gender Forum noticed that

with all the discussions about gender, a "super class" of gender experts had emerged who are articulate and like to discuss issues among themselves, but who threaten to leave interested lay people behind. For this reason, new formats have been developed – artists are invited, the classic debate format has been cultivated, and constructive conversations in smaller groups have been organized in world café rounds.

In order to get out of the elite bubble of the capital city and closer to the grass roots, the Gender Forum has gone on tour for some time now. Since 2008 the forum has also been held on a regular basis in the city of Kisumu on Lake Victoria, in cooperation with the Kenya Female Advisory Organization (KEFEADO). Stops have also been made at the coastal city of Mombasa, and individual events have been held in other parts of the country. Contemporary issues, such as the budgets of the newly decentralized county governments, are usually discussed. In late June 2014, Kisumu's budget was the focus of a critical gender analysis. For the first time, Sengi Osodo, chair of the Association for People with Disabilities, heard about a budgetary quota for people with disabilities – in Kenya, as in other countries, the disabled have always been lumped together with women in a single category. Prior to this, people with disabilities had to make do with only two schools, both of which were in deplorable condition.

When two hundred people attend the Gender Forum in Nairobi, it is remarkable. When in October 2014 over two hundred people came to Kitengela, a



Njeri Kabeberi from the Center for Multiparty Democracy, Kenya, at a Gender Forum in Kenya
Photo: Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung

- ▶ town in Kajiado County on the border with Tanzania, it was a sensation. The county had already broken with the traditional rules of Maasai society by electing a woman to parliament. The forum was supposed to encourage women to run as candidates for positions at the county level. "Women must not shy away from aiming for elective political seats," Sophia Abdi Noor told those attending. She was the first woman in the Somali-influenced northeast of Kenya to make it to parliament.

Women do hold one-third of the seats in new county assemblies. However, only about ten percent of them have been elected – often less. The rest of the representatives have been appointed in order to fulfill the gender quotas in Kenya's new constitution, which states that no gender may hold more than two-thirds of the seats in an elected assembly. Already in the first months, appointed county parliamentarians noted that they were not taken as seriously as their elected male colleagues. As political science professor Maria Nzomo predicted at a Gender Forum in Nairobi, quotas have their weaknesses and limitations as an element of gender-equity policies: Patriarchy has learned to reinvent itself over and over again.

The constitutional principle has not even been implemented at the national level. In Kenya's parliament, only around nineteen percent of seats are held by women, instead of the guaranteed one-third. This is due to the lack of a clear rule about how – in an electoral system in which votes are cast for candidates rather than parties – to ensure that no more

than two-thirds of one gender dominate the national parliament. Two Gender Forums focused on this issue, one in late 2014 and the other in early 2015. What could such a mechanism look like? What are the political obstacles? Kenya's politicians have demonstrated in the past that they are very skillful at pushing women aside in political life, at ignoring and snubbing them. For these politicians, politics is a battle among men, one that they regard as their special privilege.

Joan Birika is nevertheless cautiously optimistic. The increased presence of women in the previous parliament, she says, has led to concrete improvements. Now it is essential that the women who are in parliament because of the quota rules use this opportunity to put issues concerning women and gender on the political agenda and to provide a public accounting of this – for example, at one of the next Gender Forums at the Nairobi Safari Club.

No bed of roses: Debates about Georgia's political future

Davit Usupashvili is a reformer. As a lawyer and NGO activist, he fought for the Rose Revolution in his country in 2003. Today he is speaker of the Parliament of Georgia, a "small country which has had constant problems since its independence.... But as time goes [on] our job is becoming more and more difficult." This is how he described his work in a speech he held in Paris in May 2014.

Anyone who, like Usupashvili, wants to maintain a democratic course in a post-communist country in

the shadow of Russia needs fellow combatants in civil society, people who are interested, who follow the issues, and who have ideas and staying power. The discussions organized by the Heinrich Böll Foundation's South Caucasus office since 2004 have been an important platform for this. The events were initially held only in the capital city of Tbilisi, but for some time now have taken place with increasing frequency in other Georgian cities as well. In twelve years there have been more than 360 debates, always with top-level speakers, primarily from the region, but occasionally also from Europe and the United States. In this way, the office of the Heinrich Böll Foundation in Tbilisi has become a meeting place and a site for forming opinions. Anyone who cannot attend the Wednesday evening events can listen to the debate at home via live stream. The media has reported on almost every debate.

On the tenth anniversary of the foundation's South Caucasus office, Davit Usupashvili honored this work with the following words at a conference of the Heinrich Böll Foundation: "In Georgia many organizations are active, ... but it is particularly fortunate that the Heinrich Böll Foundation has assumed a very worthy place among them. I can remember well the discussions behind closed doors starting in 2004 and the situation in Georgia, which was extremely antagonistic and very close to the political boiling point. Through the foundation's initiative, it was possible to engage in a calm and matter-of-fact debate under completely different circumstances. This contributed significantly to identifying and resolving concrete issues, on the one hand, and to establishing a general political culture in the country, on the other."

The debates reflect the moving history of the past ten years: the dawning of the Rose Revolution, the reform zeal of Mikheil Saakashvili and his team of young ministers, the disappointment about the increasingly authoritarian and ultimately repressive rule, the peaceful change of power after the elections on October 1, 2012, and the subsequent cohabitation between the new parliament and the old president. It is generally believed that the centralization of power and the speed at which it occurred did facilitate fundamental reforms (for instance, with the police and in the battle against "low-level corruption"), but in the end this also led to abuses of office.

In addition to questions of contemporary politics, sociopolitical issues are frequently discussed at the debates – the Stalin cult and the failure to critically examine the past, the patriarchal identity of the country, the extremely low representation of women in parliaments even today, and the hostility toward sexual minorities. Other issues include the shape of future reforms, for example, with regard to working conditions and the integration of people with disabilities.

The Heinrich Böll Foundation has found experts on all these issues and has brought a great variety of people into the conversation, making these public debates into a flagship for the foundation: It is "the most relevant space for discussions about democracy and civil society in Georgia," according to Giorgi Kekelidze, general director of the National Parliamentary Library of Georgia. Nino Lejava, director of the foundation office in Tbilisi, and the debate moderators themselves, trained specially for their responsibilities, hear this kind of praise frequently.

#2 Democracy! Engagement has to be learned and organized

"Meddling is the only way to stay relevant," as Heinrich Böll famously said. But sometimes meddling – or getting involved – has to be learned. In many authoritarian societies it also requires courage to identify grievances and to make demands. For this reason, the Heinrich Böll Foundation works with partners to support people in doing precisely this: meddling.

In Kenya, a digital platform was established that allows young people to interact with their local representatives (S@utiMtaani); in Afghanistan, young people organized a conversation with tone-setting elders (see the article on pp. 79); and in Israel, Arab communities have fought for access to state funds that they are already entitled to.

S@utiMtaani: Young women and men in Nairobi now have an electronic connection to their local representatives

The new constitution in Kenya was supposed to mark a new beginning. In 2010 two out of three Kenyans voted for the new constitution in the hope that many things would change in their country. In particular, the move to a less centralized state should make the country more democratic. In place of the previous nine provinces, there are now forty-seven counties that are intended to bring government and resources closer to the people.

Decentralization became a reality with the elections of 2013. The people who were elected Members of the County Assemblies (MCAs) are now supposed to represent the interests and concerns of their electorate. With this transfer of responsibilities, blame for the theft and waste of state resources can longer be shunted off to "the people in Nairobi." More than one-third of the Kenyan budget is now administered at the county level, where names and faces are known.

As yet the results are mixed. There have been successes as well as attempts by local elites to continue the patronage-clientelism system in the counties. And the old ethnic loyalties are, of course, still intact.

Even a carefully conceived reform changes little if citizens are unable to make use of the new opportunities and the greater proximity to their representatives. This is where the Community Education and Empowerment Centre (CEEC) – with support from the Heinrich Böll Foundation – enters the picture, working with a group of people that has been largely excluded from political participation and feels this acutely: the young women and men in the informal settlements and slums of the capital city Nairobi. Often enough they express their frustration in physical assaults and acts of violence. And they are easy prey for career politicians with their ethnic polemics. With assistance from the project, youth spokespersons from fifteen constituencies have learned about their right to participate and the responsibilities this entails. And if they were not already digitally savvy, they also learned how to share their perspectives and demands on electronic platforms such as Facebook and through text messages.

To ensure that the young people's messages don't disappear into thin air, the representatives of their constituencies have also been educated: about what their mandate means, what duties and responsibilities they have, and how they can make sure that young people are heard and can participate. The MCAs were informed about the options for using cell phones and Facebook for dialogue with their electorate.

After the initial training sessions, voters and representatives launched the collaborative e-platform S@utiMtaani, which roughly means "voices from the ghetto." Young women and men from the Korocho, Mathare, Dandora, Mukuru, and other slums can now send text messages to their MCAs or post their concerns on Facebook. The MCAs can answer on any device with Internet access – even if they are not in their election district at the time. CEEC is also designed to be sustainable. No one has been paid to participate in the project. The MCAs have agreed to carry the entire costs of the platform themselves following a pilot phase.

The young people have praised the format, which is unique in Kenya and also pretty cool. Concerns have already been expressed from all election districts – concrete issues such as the lack of street lamps as well as more basic issues such as the lack of jobs. And because the young people want to make something of themselves, they have also asked about youth projects, scholarships, and support from the government's new Uwezo Fund, which provides start-up support for business ideas to women, youths, and people with disabilities.

Not all MCAs have been equally enthusiastic about the project. While several have simply abandoned the effort, others have responded on a regular basis and have also taken action. Individual MCAs have even been thankful for the opportunity to communicate with their electorate, as their county is so

large that they cannot always be present everywhere. The fact that over 12,000 messages were sent in the first four months of the project suggests that contact with voters via text message and Facebook will become increasingly popular in the future.

A larger slice of the pie:

The Injaz organization helps Arab communities

They are often located between olive groves and lavender fields: Arab villages and cities in Israel. When you drive into them, however, what you encounter are bad roads, dilapidated schools, garbage heaps, and a rare playground. Arab municipalities in the Jewish country are chronically underfinanced. On average they have only forty-five to sixty percent of the budget available for their Jewish counterparts.

Ghaida Renawie-Zoabi is an energetic woman who is good with numbers and money. The director of the Arab organization Injaz laments the structural disadvantages of non-Jewish towns in Israel. For example, of the seventy-two Arab municipalities only four have been authorized in the past decades to expand a city district or establish a new one. "We have to act against discrimination," she emphasizes. "But at the same time we also have to take what we can get, as long as we go about it professionally enough."

With her organization Renawie-Zoabi concentrates on what she can change right now. She explains that all municipalities have the same basic budget, which covers on average thirty percent of their needs. The remaining seventy percent of public funds for municipalities comes from separate, earmarked budgets – for infrastructure, environmental protection, nursery schools, and so on – and must be applied for separately. "That's the big money," Renawie-Zoabi emphasizes. And that is precisely where the problem lies. The mayors and the senior management of Arab municipalities lack the know-how and experience in applying for funds. "I make it clear to them that because of this they lose millions of shekels and that they have to become more professional in order to change this."

In response, the Heinrich Böll Foundation in Tel Aviv networked Injaz with the Jewish-Israeli Heshel Center for Sustainability, which specializes in capacity building – i.e., removing impediments to development. Together the three partners have developed a program with workshops and seminars to professionalize decision-makers and senior administrators. "This is an issue of very basic civil rights," says Kerstin Müller, director of the Heinrich Böll Foundation in Tel Aviv. "A just distribution of state funding increases trust in democracy overall."

A fair share of state resources is also enormously important for the Arab minority because ninety percent of them live in their own villages, cities, and city districts, separate from the Jewish Israeli population. They identify even more strongly with their place of residence than other inhabitants of the country. This



At the edge of a settlement in the Negev Desert in Israel Photo: Dafna Tal (für NEGEV IMOT)

is evident in the high voter turnouts in local elections. Precisely because the Arab population – basically Palestinians with Israeli passports – often has a distanced relationship to the Israeli government, their own community plays such an important role.

Democratic structures are valuable for the Arab population only if these structures allow them equal access to funding. And that will ultimately be good for democracy overall in Israel. “Functioning municipalities are necessary in order for a democratic society to grow,” says Renawie-Zoabi. “For this reason we have planned each project with an element of citizen participation.” Especially women and young people, she says, are politically marginalized in the Arab towns.

Several municipalities have already achieved initial successes. For example, an industrial zone was approved for Kafr Qasim, a town of 20,000, and two neighboring villages. No one, however, wanted to settle there. The municipalities had not been able to administer this special zone effectively. With assistance from Injaz, proposals were written and a solution was worked out. Through funding from the Israeli Ministry of Economics, a company was finally established that currently manages the industrial zone. “A major step forward,” Renawie-Zoabi says.

With support from the Heinrich Böll Foundation, Injaz has even made environmental projects palatable to Arab communities. “Initially I often heard: that is only something for wealthy communities,” says the Injaz director. But with our joint forces we could make clear to them, she continues, that environmental projects are not only sustainable and good for our health, but also save money. A community can save up to twelve percent if the disposal of waste and

wastewater is organized in an environmentally sound way. For this alone 100 million shekels – around 20 million euros – are available from the government. “We have shown the communities how they can apply for this funding,” says Renawie-Zoabi.

There is also “a whole lot of money” available for the development of communities in the Negev Desert, Renawie-Zoabi explains enthusiastically. The Israeli government had approved a special budget for southern Israel, but the seven Arab-Bedouin communities were not included in an informational meeting. “Fortunately we heard about it and helped them to apply for the funds,” the Injaz director remarks. In 2015 these traditionally very poor villages were granted millions of shekels for the first time. “Without us they would not have even known about the funds,” says a pleased Renawie-Zoabi. Democracy can be very profitable.

#3 Gender democracy: The emancipation of the polity

When women exercise their rights, democracy also wins. Wherever society needs some help to make this true, the Heinrich Böll Foundation gets involved: to help get women elected to parliament and by supporting them after they have been elected, to promote classical women’s programs to increase their participation, to engage in discussions to promote gender equity in society, and to focus on international women’s politics (on this see the chapter “Without borders: The global participation of civil society,” pp. 96).

One important aspect of a vital democracy is that no one be persecuted due to sexual orientation or gender identity. This kind of discrimination, however, occurs in many societies. The Heinrich Böll Foundation works with partners to change this. It has played a leading role in promoting the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans*, and inter* (LGBTI) people.

Half the sky: Pakistan's female parliamentarians join forces in the Women's Parliamentary Caucus

If a woman is prime minister of a country, the situation can't be too bad for female politicians – or so one might think. But Benazir Bhutto, twice the head of government and a long-time opposition leader, was an exception in Pakistan. The scion of a political dynasty, she assumed the political heritage of her father, who was assassinated in 1982. She herself was killed in 2007, two weeks before a general election in which she was the leading candidate.

In the less glamorous spheres of politics, in contrast, women have hardly any opportunities in Pakistan. Only through a quota system could a critical mass even be achieved in parliament. Of the 336 seats in the National Assembly, sixty are reserved for women. There also are eight women in the current parliament who made it there on their own. From March 2008 to June 2013, Fahmida Mirza was speaker of the National Assembly, the first time a woman headed the parliament in Pakistan.

In 2008 the female members of the National Assembly together with senators from the upper house founded the Women's Parliamentary Caucus (WPC), an informal group that seeks a consensus on gender-related issues beyond party lines and positions and that promotes women's participation in legal and political decision-making. "Gender quotas have proved to be a very effective means in Southern Asia," says Ali Kazmi, the WPC coordinator.

The caucus is located directly in parliament but is financed by membership fees and subsidies. The Heinrich Böll Foundation supports the WPC through intensive organizational advising that focuses on producing action and lobbying plans. At a joint conference, parliamentarians discussed with representatives of civil society and supporting organizations the gender-related issues that need to be adopted in political party programs. The focus here was on issues that could be addressed through legislation.

Very few parliamentarians who had been active in the WPC made it into parliament again in 2013, in part because their own parties did not nominate them and in part because the party landscape had changed. To ensure that the caucus does not have to start all over again, the Heinrich Böll Foundation has helped to establish a new organization consisting primarily of former female members of parliament who advise and support their successors in the exercise of their duties.

The WPC regards as its greatest success to date the changes in the mandate of the National Commission for Women. The commission had long shared responsibility for national women's policy, but was nevertheless a toothless and powerless organization, like many others. "We got all the political parties on board, went with a draft law to parliament, and vested the commission with rights and powers," Kazmi explains.

A lot has changed already, Kazmi continues. Unchanged, however, is the lack of respect for female parliamentarians, whom male representatives often regard merely as "quota women." How to confront such cultural and structural barriers was the topic of a study commissioned by the Heinrich Böll Foundation and published in December 2015.

Courageously opposing the majority: Gays and lesbians in the South Caucasus begin to organize

The activists in Tbilisi had actually thought of everything: They had consulted with the interior ministry and the justice ministry and had notified authorities about their planned demonstration. The police had promised to protect them. And Bidzina Ivanishvili, prime minister of Georgia at the time, had emphasized once again as a precaution that people who belonged to sexual minorities were citizens just like all other Georgians. The ban on homosexuality, issued by Stalin in 1933, had already been lifted in 2000.

But when the approximately sixty women and men met in front of the old parliament building on Wednesday, May 17, 2013, the square was already occupied. The demonstrators were confronted by a huge, aggressive crowd with flags and crosses ready to conduct a crusade against them. They switched to plan B and moved in the direction of Freedom Square. Led by priests of the Georgian Orthodox Church, the crowd pursued them, while the police intervened half-heartedly and ineffectively. In the end seventeen people were injured. Several counter-demonstrators also attacked the yellow minibus that police had loaded the activists into in order to drive them away from the square.

A number of Orthodox Church leaders in Georgia had called for the counter-protest. The church has attained alarming power in recent years and now sets the tone in almost every area of society, although for the most part discreetly. When the issue is homosexuality, the Church – like many Georgians – has little neighborly love. Opinion polls show that homophobia is very widespread, due to ignorance and uncertainty, but also because many Georgians see a threat to their strongly patriarchal culture and some even fear for the fitness of the army. In addition there is still an inadequate understanding of democratic values and minority rights.

The South Caucasus office of the Heinrich Böll Foundation has supported the courageous LGBTI people in Georgia to organize and take a public stance in several ways: through the first nationwide public event on the issue (2005), through support of ME, the first LGBT magazine of the Inclusive Foundation, and also through cooperation with the Women's Initiatives Supporting Group (WISG) and other formal and informal LGBTI groups. The foundation has also repeatedly raised the issue of the rights of people with nonconforming sexual orientations and gender identities at its own civic education events – in Tbilisi, Batumi, and Kutaisi.

“Opinion polls show that homophobia is very widespread, due to ignorance and uncertainty.”

In the capital city Tbilisi there is at least a small “scene” with bars and events such as the “film nights” by the Identoba (Identity) organization. LGBTI organizations are also supported by several NGOs with other focuses and now also by international donors. After the first attempt at a demonstration failed in 2012, there was a spontaneous show of solidarity by heterosexual Georgians in front of parliament the next day, supported by the embassies of the Netherlands and France. An anti-discrimination law was also passed unanimously by parliament on May 2, 2014 – with a view to the EU association process.

The situation of LGBTI people is much more difficult in Armenia, a geo-politically isolated country with an even more closed society. An example from 2013 shows how great the fear of “subversive” liberal ideas is there: even the use of the term “gender” in a legislative bill triggered a bizarre conflict. In the end the term was replaced by the words “men and women.”

In a climate like this, even violent perpetrators find support. In 2012, the DIY Club in the center of Yerevan was attacked twice. The club belonged to Armine Oganeyeva, a popular rock musician, and was known as a meeting place for gays and lesbians. Politicians of both the opposition and the governing party had warm words for the perpetrators. Oganeyeva, who received death threats, lives today in Sweden.

In Armenia as well, courageous people have raised their voices for the rights of LGBTI people: the women's organization Society Without Violence (SWV) and the NGO PINK Armenia. PINK stands for “Public Information and Need of Knowledge” – which is also a description of the group's program: fighting prejudice through awareness and education. Even the delegation of the European Union and the German ambassador in Armenia experienced fear and rejection first-hand when in 2012 they tried to rent a venue to show the award-winning tragicomedy *The*

Parade, a gay-themed film by Serbian director Srđan Dragojević. For this reason the Heinrich Böll Foundation chose to make its screening in Yerevan of the documentary film *Mom, Dad, I'm Gay* by Georgian director Lia Jaqeli a closed event with invited guests. At the foundation's office in Tbilisi, in contrast, there was a public screening of the film followed by a discussion.

Since early 2015 two new Georgian NGOs have worked together with the aforementioned NGOs from Armenia as part of an umbrella project, Solidarity Network for LGBTI in Armenia and Georgia, initiated by the Heinrich Böll Foundation and supported by the EU. The project seeks to raise awareness to the concerns and the rights of these marginalized groups.

#4 Public democracy: Information as a currency for democrats

Freedom of opinion and freedom of the press are two of the most basic human rights. They are also an elementary foundation for a functioning democracy. For this reason they are of central significance for the Heinrich Böll Foundation's work for democracy. The spectrum here ranges from programs in traditional media to workshops about cyber-security to ensure that persecuted groups are able to use the new media without endangering themselves.

The Heinrich Böll Foundation supports courageous journalists in Thailand and Mexico and has, through “Arab Blogger Meetings,” supported the recent uprising of young people in the Arab world. In Nigeria, the foundation has shown how well-placed twitter campaigns can help people in remote areas obtain and exercise their rights.

Twitter until something happens: Concerted actions of Media Champions

The inhabitants of Zamfara, a state in northwestern Nigeria, have none of the country's oil wealth. Here people survive as best they can from agriculture and animal husbandry. During the annual vaccination campaign in the summer of 2010, medical personnel traveling there from the city noticed that there were far fewer children in line than usual. “Malaria,” the parents told them. But it was not malaria – the boys and girls had died from lead poisoning. The poisonous heavy metal had been released when their parents crushed stones in order to extract gold, which had become very valuable on the world market.

Doctors without Borders came to treat the children, and experts from the United States arrived to examine the contaminated soil and remove it. The Nigerian government issued a ban on this kind of gold

mining. Seven of the eight affected villages were decontaminated, but the town of Bagega, with 7,535 inhabitants, waited in vain. The people were told that the money had been approved and that the decontamination would start soon. When nothing had happened by 2012, activists from the NGO Follow the Money initiated a search for the funds that had allegedly been earmarked. They spoke with the people of Bagega, identified a high-ranking ally in the bureaucratic apparatus, and started a media campaign. In late January 2013 one million people had claimed to have heard about the scandal of the promised decontamination.

A twitter campaign conceived in the office of the Heinrich Böll Foundation (#SaveBagega) finally tipped the scales: within forty-eight hours the money (850 million Naira) was finally released by the central government. In March the examination and treatment of the children began and the contaminated soil was removed. "If government spending reached communities for which it is intended, there would not be much need for foreign aid in some developing countries," according to Oludotun Babayemi and Hamzat Lawal, the two initiators of Follow the Money. "Children would receive vaccinations, disease might be eradicated, there would be an increase in yield on crops, and entrepreneurs would have 'direct access' to funds." Collaborating with a group of selected activists called the Social Media Champions, the Heinrich Böll Foundation has focused not only on monitoring government spending, but also on identifying methods for a green approach (such as Green Deal Nigeria): alternative policies that at the same time could improve the living conditions of normal people. Since in Nigeria as elsewhere people sometimes twitter too hastily, debate issues are carefully prepared. First, experts are consulted, ideas are developed, selling points and key issues are considered, and fact sheets are compiled, and then the journalists, bloggers, and twitterers get busy. In the summer of 2014, a debate about local public transportation in the capital city Abuja was started in this way (#arabapalava) – every morning millions of residents waste time waiting for buses that come far too infrequently, while anyone who can takes an expensive taxi.

In the run-up to parliamentary elections in February 2015 there was a multimedia campaign with the Center for Social Justice (CSJ) that was aimed especially at politically interested young people, who are themselves digital multipliers. Another green issue – the decentralized use of alternative energy sources – was coupled to a social consideration: the fact that large megaprojects cost citizens a lot of money and are also inefficient.

CSJ also developed an online game called "Sell Your Vote?" The game shows young people what they stand to lose if they put their vote up for sale. By selling their vote, players can collect various amounts

of money, but – as the game teaches them – "their" candidate always finds a way to get the money back from public funds after being elected.

"This crazy power of the media": Chiranuch Premchaiporn, managing director of the Prachatai Internet platform

She had to do it all herself through hard work. She is not one of those young bloggers who was born a "digital native" and grew up with the Internet. When Chiranuch studied journalism at the renowned Thammasat University in Bangkok in the 1990s, online media was not yet part of the curriculum – and she was a student who took a more relaxed approach. "I was pretty darn lazy!" she laughs. Now, years later, media activism is her life and the Internet the virtual space in which she passionately engages in politics. Chiranuch is co-founder, editorial member, and managing director of the Thai Internet platform Prachatai, which celebrated its tenth anniversary in 2014 and has meanwhile expanded into a team of seventeen staff editors. Before Prachatai, Chiranuch used her journalism degree primarily to work on campaigns with NGOs on HIV/AIDS issues. During this time she came to understand the nexus of media, power, and politics. "In hardly any other area," Chiranuch argues, "do you feel this crazy power of the media to stigmatize people as victims and to reproduce stereotypes – instead of making critical information available and thereby ensuring that people have space to make their own decisions." The idea of founding Prachatai arose also as a counter-weight to the monopolization of the media by then prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra, who used his own media power for populist purposes. Even if only about one in every ten people in Thailand had Internet access at the time, a website seemed to offer an opportunity to open up a different, critical, alternative perspective.

Chiranuch is herself to a large extent responsible for the fact that Prachatai's simple goal has increased in political clout over the course of the past turbulent decade in Thailand. In 2006, the military came to power through a putsch and was initially celebrated by Thaksin opponents. The new government, however, issued further restrictions on the media and politics – in addition to *lèse majesté* (the crime of criticizing the ruling sovereign), a new cybercrimes law (Computer Crime Act) was passed in 2007, which permitted for the first time the systematic prosecution of Internet content. In 2009 Chiranuch was arrested under this law for not having stopped an alleged *lèse majesté* offense on the Prachatai forum. Her trial lasted more than three years and attracted international attention. Numerous NGOs held solidarity campaigns. Chiranuch was detained for months before finally being acquitted of the charge of *lèse majesté*.

A high price? "I didn't find this first trial so bad," Chiranuch says. "The actual nightmare came later,

when I was arrested at the airport.” That was in 2010, when she was returning from an Internet conference in Hungary. A new indictment had been issued under the Computer Crime Act. “I was suddenly no longer certain if I could ever go home.” Again the authorities released her, and again Chiranuch was determined not to let herself be guided by fear and self-censorship. In the meantime Prachatai had become more than a website. The team offers journalism courses for activists on a regular basis and has built up a huge network of contacts – “citizen-journalists” – who supply important information. Much of this is also translated into English and used by the international media. Chiranuch’s second major

She was fortunate. Her own mother rebelled against this stereotype and sent her daughter first to a good school and then to university. Now Reaksmeay fights with her fellow combatants at Strey Khmer to ensure that other women also have opportunities like this and that they dare to get involved in politics.

The “Women’s Voice, Women’s Choices” call-in radio show is one of the organization’s most successful projects. Since early 2005 the number of listeners and callers has grown steadily, and recently they even had to give up their broadcasting slot at the RNK public radio station and move to the alternative Voices of Democracy station – a sure sign that the issues discussed on the show had become too political for the government. The fact that the show’s producers don’t hold back when selecting topics convinced the Heinrich Böll Foundation to provide support, which it has done since 2009. Strey Khmer is also clearly different from other development organizations that continue, even in explicit support programs, to address women as victims, thereby perpetuating the stereotype of female passivity. The radio show, in contrast, is run entirely by women with training in the field who have become politically active in the process. The show reaches very different women in urban and rural areas. While listening they can continue with their own work and still participate in the discussion.

Anyone who misses one of the shows can listen to it on CD. Strey Khmer has organized a nationwide network of so-called listener clubs, in which women meet to discuss the show and distribute CDs of the broadcasts. The number of listener clubs continues to grow. The shows will soon be available online as well. Strey Khmer ensures that women are heard and that they have a say. “But it’s still a long way off before we here in Cambodia can speak of real democracy,” says Reaksmeay, laughing her infectious laugh.

#5 Divided democracy: Liberation from the burdens of the past

When a dictatorship is brought down or a conflict is ended, it becomes possible to listen to the survivors, compensate the victims, and hold the perpetrators accountable. These processes of truth-finding are memory work, which enable the people of a country to develop a shared understanding of history. This is difficult to do when resentments persist, the conflict continues to simmer, and perpetrators and victims have to live together.

This is why the Heinrich Böll Foundation supports efforts to come to an understanding about the past, to address the different conflicts of memory (in Turkey, for example, the genocide of the Armenians, the suppression of the Kurds, and the victims of the mili-

“The media and social networks are closely monitored.”

nightmare occurred, however, during the preparations for the platform’s tenth anniversary, in which the important successes of Prachatai were to be celebrated. There was another military putsch in May 2014. In the aftermath, the military regime arrested a number of academics, journalists, and activists and used draconian measures to suppress freedom of assembly and freedom of speech in the country. The media and social networks are closely monitored. But Chiranuch also sees the renewed crisis as a chance for political development, despite the obvious restrictions. She and her colleagues have set about meticulously documenting developments under the military regime. “When the time comes and we are once again able to have a democratic dialogue in Thailand, we will need these documents,” Chiranuch says with conviction.

Live on the air: The “Women’s Voices, Women’s Choices” call-in radio show

Every Thursday between 4:30 and 5:30 pm the telephone rings nonstop at Strey Khmer. Less than a third of the callers actually get through. Anyone who does can take part in the discussion on the (gender) political issue of the week. The discussion is broadcast live on FM 107.75. Welcome to “Women’s Voices, Women’s Choices.”

The name of the show describes its agenda as well as that of the organization which initiated it: Strey Khmer means “Cambodian women.” In Cambodia, the classic feminist promotion of women remains urgent and contentious. “My grandmother always told me to find a husband and stay at home, instead of continuing my studies,” explains Reaksmeay Arun, the young director of Strey Khmer. According to a still prevalent gender norm, the “Chbab Srey” – which also continues to be taught in schools – Cambodian women are supposed to obey their husbands. “Anything that goes beyond the kitchen is considered disreputable,” Reaksmeay explains.

tary coup) and to connect the documentation of past crimes with the current commitment to human rights (for example, as a long-time partner of Memorial, a human rights organization in Moscow).

Balancing act in Russia: Memorial – a little complicated and very successful

Memorial is a well-known, large, somewhat complicated, and very successful organization. Established in 1988 – still during the Soviet era – out of a civil-rights movement, Memorial is today a network, a confederation of more than eighty member organizations, most of them in Russia, but also in Ukraine, Germany, Belarus, and Italy.

Memorial is grounded on three cornerstones: the critical examination of the Soviet Union's totalitarian past and the crimes of the state against its own population; the fight against human rights violations today; and the social welfare of victims of political repression. Not all Memorial member organizations do all of these things; many have specialized. Most Memorial members are regional organizations, such as Perm Memorial, Komi Memorial, or Ryazan Memorial. There are also issue-oriented member organizations. The most important are the Memorial Human Rights Center, the Memorial Scientific-Historical Research and Enlightenment Center (NIPC), and the Perm-36 Museum, as well as a nationwide network of legal assistance centers for refugees and forced migrants.

All of this – the entire structure, in part consciously created and in part spontaneously developed over more than twenty-five years, as well as the entire work of the member organizations – has made Memorial the best-known Russian NGO. The Heinrich Böll Foundation and Memorial have worked together for twenty-five years. This cooperation began back in 1990 with a project to assist former so-called *Ostarbeiter* or “Eastern Workers,” men and women who were transported by the Wehrmacht from the occupied Soviet Union to Germany during the Second World War to be used as forced laborers. There were a total of eight million Eastern Workers, although only two million survivors returned to the Soviet Union after the defeat of Nazi Germany.

Those returning, however, faced a difficult life in their homeland. The men were regarded as traitors (simply because they had survived!) and most were sent to Soviet labor camps. The women were subject to discrimination their entire lives; they were not allowed to live in major cities or to attend institutions of higher education. This gave rise to the Victims of Two Dictatorships project, a joint endeavor that has connected Memorial and the Heinrich Böll Foundation up to the present day.

Many other collaborative projects followed, including a joint scholarship program for young historians and sociologists, a history competition for school children entitled “People in History – Russia in the

Twentieth Century,” and the Polish Project supporting Polish victims of Soviet state repression. Over time, the cooperation between Memorial and the Heinrich Böll Foundation has grown into a veritable, one might even say, political friendship. Memorial and the Heinrich Böll Foundation have co-organized a Green Russia Forum, which meets on a regular basis in Moscow and Berlin, and they have put on the European History Forum in Berlin every autumn for several years.

There is, however, another special aspect of Memorial: its internal democracy. Unlike almost any other Russian NGO, Memorial not only demands democratic rules for society, but is itself organized democratically. Memorial does, of course, have people in leadership positions, whose words carry somewhat more weight in a discussion than those of others and who are paid a little more attention. But every two years there are democratic elections, and twenty-seven people are voted onto the executive board, often after long and controversial discussions.

Memorial's extended structure – anchored in many places not in branch offices, but in independent member organizations that formed in the respective regions – and especially its indisputable competency in all questions regarding the totalitarian and repressive sides of Soviet history have made it into an institution. These are more than empty words. Even today, in these (once again) difficult times for NGOs in Russia, this reputation provides at least some protection for Memorial.

For several years now, official state history has been celebrated very actively in Russia, based particularly on the glorification of the Soviet victory in the Second World War under Stalin's leadership. This has contributed to a certain Stalin renaissance, although this wasn't exactly the Kremlin's intention. The politics of history in this regard is eclectic, as the millions of victims of political persecution (especially, but not exclusively, under Stalin) have also not been forgotten. For several years now, there have been plans for a central state memorial site in Moscow. And Memorial will participate in the planning.

The reason for this is the populist character of the Putin government. Putin draws his legitimacy, on the one hand, from being economically successful and – at least in the way he presents himself, but also in the eyes of many people – from having raised the international reputation of the country again (the fact that this reputation is based to a large degree on the fear of Russia has also been a source of some satisfaction). On the other hand, however, Putin cannot afford to ignore (or he believes he cannot ignore) the fact that virtually everyone in Russia has memories of persecuted family members and relatives. And it is here that Memorial comes into play: for without Memorial's approval, no memorial site would be regarded as truly authentic, as being “correct.”



Irina Scherbakowa, Memorial
Photo: Stephan Röhl



Arsenij Roginskij, Memorial
Photo: Stephan Röhl

Again, this does protect Memorial to some extent and makes these partners somewhat more stable than many other NGOs, which have recently been declared “foreign agents” (as have several Memorial member organizations and another Böll Foundation partner, the Center for Gender Research in Samara). It is no easy task to work for a differentiated view of history, to fight for human rights, and to take a stand against one’s own, very powerful government. It is a balancing act.

“We are all Armenians”: Several conflicts in Turkey must be examined critically

Turkey is a country of state-decreed amnesia. This makes it difficult to critically examine the past. The issue is additionally complicated by the fact that there are several different groups of victims and affected people. The torture victims of the military interventions (1960, 1971, 1980, and 1997) do not want a new historiography, but rather to have the perpetrators put behind bars. The Kurds insist that there be a comprehensive peace process that includes not only the investigation of human rights violations since the 1980s and compensation for the victims, but also an autonomy arrangement they find acceptable. The Armenians want an acknowledgment of the genocide (1915) along with a critical examination of it, but they also want to be respected as a minority.

Even among those committed to a critical examination of the past, there is no consensus about which of the many traumatic events in Turkish history should represent the starting point: Should it begin by commemorating the oppression of the Kurds as a very contemporary and still ongoing conflict? Or should it start with the murder of the Armenians, which occurred a hundred years ago?

There is also conflict about the kind of critical examination. Victims of the military dictatorship, for instance, reject the use of truth commissions established in other countries experiencing conflict because they do not want the perpetrators to be able to obtain legal immunity through their confessions.

The Heinrich Böll Foundation advocates engaging in a critical examination of all of these issues sepa-

rately but concurrently. The roots of these acts and the silence surrounding them have many similarities: the Turkish conception of the state, the exuberant nationalism, and the continuing culture of impunity. The sociopolitical dynamics of a process that would encompass all the crimes simultaneously would be unmanageable. Thus each victim group works for a critical examination of the crimes perpetrated against that particular group.

The Heinrich Böll Foundation has worked with Kurdish groups for many years on this issue. It has supported institutions documenting human rights violations and has organized events dealing with comparable experiences of transitional justice in other countries. The Heinrich Böll Foundation also cooperates with Armenian institutions, such as the Hrant Dink Foundation, which is named after the Armenian journalist who was murdered in Istanbul in 2007. His death triggered a broad public discussion at the time about the situation of Armenians in Turkey.

The demands of Armenians within the country often differ from those of Armenians in the diaspora. Many Turkish Armenians are concerned with being respected as a minority in Turkey, having equal rights as a non-Muslim religious community, and obtaining reparations for historical injustices, such as the confiscation of Armenian church property. Their focus is the democratization of Turkey and the normalization of bilateral relations with Armenia. For many Armenians in Turkey, recognition of the genocide is not necessarily a primary concern.

The desire to confront this tragic history is also not limited to Armenians. More than 100,000 people attended the memorial services for Hrant Dink, many of them – Turks without Armenian roots – holding up black signs with white words reading: “We are all Armenians.” They did this not only to honor the murdered journalist, but also to oppose the fact that the word “Armenian” is still used as an insult in Turkey today. In terms of understanding the past, a part of Turkish society is ahead of its own government.

In 2014, then prime minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan apologized for the first time for the crimes of the past. But the country remains far removed from en-

gaging in a publicly promoted critical examination of this history, for instance, in classrooms, with research funds, or in memorials and museums. Even the people behind Hrant Dink's murder have yet to be held accountable, despite assurances from the government.

The Heinrich Böll Foundation follows these developments very closely. It has taken up the issue of the Armenian genocide for another reason as well: Germany had a role in the planning, execution, and concealment of the crime. Officials in Berlin at the time knew what was happening in the Ottoman Empire and brushed aside well-documented information from a missionary as well as reports from diplomats and the military. In December 2011 the Heinrich Böll Foundation organized a major conference on the subject. For the centennial of the genocide, the foundation supported a publication on the role of the German Reich in the crimes and also sponsored an international conference that took place in September 2015.

#6 Responsible democracy: For just resource policies

How a country deals with its natural resources is not only a question of economy and ecology; it is also an issue of how citizens participate in decisions about the use of raw materials.

There is a lot of reflection and work at the Heinrich Böll Foundation on this issue: in fundamental terms, with new policy approaches; in critical terms, with an eye to extractivist development models; in practical terms, with demands for transparency and responsibility along the supply chain in the resources sector; and in concrete terms within the local context, where an awareness of the dangers and consequences first arises and where a sharing of benefits must be demanded in the face of powerful economic interests.

Natural gas production out of control: The Israel Energy Forum fights for democratic participation in raw material deposits

Yael Cohen-Paran wishes that Israel were Norway – but not because of the peaceful and unhurried life in the far north of Europe. The young managing director of the Israel Energy Forum (IEF) admires the “clever energy policy” of the Scandinavian country. Although private companies participate in the production of natural gas and oil in Norway, the Norwegian state retains the majority stake and imposes a 78 percent tax to ensure that the Norwegian population profits from the country's natural resources. Israel does the opposite, Cohen-Paran notes critically. Democratic participation in the utilization of the

massive natural gas deposits off the coast of Israel plays a subordinate role. According to the law, only 12.5 percent of royalties flow into the state treasury as license revenues – astonishingly low in international comparison. The population has as yet hardly profited at all, since due to monopolization the price of natural gas has not even fallen.

“Even among those committed to a critical examination of the past, there is no consensus about which of the many traumatic events in Turkish history should represent the starting point.”

For years, people fretted that Israel was the only country in the entire Middle East without its own energy resources. But when gigantic natural gas fields were finally discovered offshore in 2009 and 2010, the government left them to private investors – whose interests of course differ from those of the Israeli state and population. After years of drilling, exploration, and development, the Tamar field became operational in 2013. The Leviathan field will be ready in the coming years. The investors intend to export as much as possible in order to offset their investment of three to four billion US dollars.

“From our perspective, however, export is the worst option,” Cohen-Paran says. Producing electricity from natural gas, she continues, is still “greener” than burning coal or oil. Currently, 60 percent of Israel's electricity needs are covered by coal, the rest by natural gas – which is much more than it used to be. Many industrial facilities around the port city of Haifa, for example, have switched to natural gas, thereby reducing air pollution. “We want an energy revolution. Why should we export natural gas before we have an alternative?”

Through campaigns and public relations, the Israel Energy Forum seeks to create awareness about the selling off of resources and to stimulate a broad debate. “Climate change will have massive effects on Israel,” says Kerstin Müller, director of the Heinrich Böll Foundation office in Tel Aviv. “The natural gas finds allow for an entirely new energy concept. For this reason it is very important now to exert pressure for greater participation in making these decisions.” The Heinrich Böll Foundation supports the IEF in this because precisely in a conflict region, where it is often a matter of war and peace, issues involving “merely” the environment and democracy have an especially hard time being heard.

The campaigns have been quite successful. Many Israelis joined the protests against natural gas exports in 2013. “People understood that something was totally off here. That drove them onto the streets,” says Cohen-Paran. The protesters demanded more say and less exports than planned. And

the campaign was actually able to achieve something: instead of 53 percent, now only 40 percent of the output will be exported. In the summer of 2015 people again took to the streets in various cities to protest the natural gas production policies of the Netanyahu government.

The reason for the opaque treatment of natural resource deposits, according to Yael Cohen-Paran, is the overly cozy connection between politicians and the natural gas producing consortium, led by the Delek Group, an Israeli conglomerate, and Noble Energy, an American company. Politicians and senior government officials have frequently moved to the private sector and worked for companies participating in the consortium. And just as frequently statements by corporations have been adopted by the government in advance almost word for word.

The agreement reached in the summer of 2015 largely accorded with the demands of the corporations – at the cost of consumers, the state budget, and energy security. And according to a provision in the agreement, successor governments will not be able to alter this in any way for the next ten to fifteen years. “This proximity between leading politicians and the corporations is a threat to democracy,” says Cohen-Paran. “We have the feeling that our country doesn’t belong to us.”

Not without a legal basis: An environmental natural resource monitoring network in Afghanistan fights for transparency in resource depletion

The map of Afghanistan looks as if someone had decorated it with colorful decals: black droplets, green circles, white stars, and yellow hexagons are spread all over the country. Oil, lithium, jewels, and gold, according to the map legend – and that’s only a small part of the mineral resources listed. Given the substantial reduction in international aid, the map holds great promise for many in Afghanistan.

The genuinely political character of the issue of resources is thereby misunderstood and the connection between resource depletion and local conflicts overlooked. Consequently, since early 2012 the Heinrich Böll Foundation has been active on this politically explosive terrain, locally, nationally, and internationally. An event in Kabul in July 2012 broke the cautious silence about resource conflicts and led to the establishment of an environmental and natural resource monitoring network (ENRMN). ♡ “Even if the environmental and natural resource monitoring network was really quite small at first,” Neelab Hakim, environmental coordinator for the office of the Heinrich Böll Foundation in Kabul, explains, “we all participated from the start with great enthusiasm.” The network now has more than fifty members

and has also become the most important contact for government officials.

In Logar province, about thirty-five kilometers southwest of Kabul, where one of the largest copper deposits in the world is thought to be located, a mining contract between the Afghan government and a Chinese consortium was signed behind closed doors in 2008. Most people only learned through the media that the contract had been signed and that the community would be resettled and compensated by the government, says Mussa Mahmoodi, director of the Logar Civil Society Association. Five villages have meanwhile been resettled, but hardly any compensation has been paid.

For many of the village residents, the resettlement has been a personal catastrophe. In addition to the loss of house and land, entire village communities have been torn apart. Especially for women, resettlement has meant the collapse of social structures and painstakingly established freedoms. “Before the resettlement we could attend celebrations such as funerals and marriages in the neighboring villages without any problem. Now it is no longer possible to reach our neighboring villages by foot,” says one female villager. The promise of jobs for members of the surrounding communities also has not been kept, Mussa Mahmoodi notes soberly.

Mussa’s worried visits to the Kabul office moved the Heinrich Böll Foundation to organize an initial environmental training course in Logar. “One of the participants said to me that this was the first time since international support began twelve years ago that international organizations did not come only to study them, but to share important information with them,” says Neelab Hakim.

With support from the environmental network, similar training courses have now taken place in five different provinces. Here, too, the consequences of resettlement for the local population were clear: No one seemed interested that the affected communities had lost their entire livelihood through the forced resettlement, that their animals no longer had any grazing land, and that the graves of their relatives had to be moved because of the projects. At the same time, there was a rise in violent activities by armed anti-government groups shortly after the development of copper, iron ore, coal, gas, and oil deposits throughout the provinces. The long-term goal of the training courses was to enable participants afterwards to document their situation on their own, to publicize it, and in this way to be able to demand their rights.

Parallel to the training and networking initiatives with the provinces, a lobbying process also took place on the national and international level, assisted by

♡ Notice

See Environment and Natural Resources Monitoring

Network (ENRMN), www.enrmn.net/en/.



Archaeologists in Afghanistan in a race against copper mining Photo: Jerome Starkey

- ▶ the Heinrich Böll Foundation. Together with the environmental and natural resource monitoring network and a group of international actors, a catalog of demands was worked out identifying the most blatant deficiencies in terms of taxation mechanisms and transparency in the resource sector. The signatories also called for public consultations and transparent contracts for resource development, as well for compliance with international standards of environmental and social sustainability.

At the donor conference in Tokyo in 2012, the civil society initiative celebrated a first important success: In the Mutual Accountability Framework, which ties the approval of a total of sixteen million US dollars in aid to compliance with certain conditions, a provision was included requiring that legal parameters be established for the extraction of natural resources. Local participation was listed as one of the indicators for the implementation.

Pleased with this success, the environmental and natural resource monitoring network began a multitude of campaigns. When a new mining law was due to be passed in 2014, members of the network decided to hold a large demonstration in front of the Afghan parliament to draw attention to the most glaring shortcomings of the proposed legislation and its disadvantages for the Afghan population. A growing number of representatives gradually sided with the civil society group. In the end they were able to prevent then president Hamid Karzai from signing the legislation, thus forcing a revision of the legislative proposal.

The environmental and natural resource monitoring network has become a respected and professional

source for consultancy and knowledge sharing that is in great demand by the Afghan government, other civil society groups, and the media.

#7 Everyday democracy: Public spaces are a prerequisite

“City air makes you free.” The history of the city is closely tied to the emergence and establishment of democracy. Cities were and are places of opportunity and sites for coming together. They lose this function when public spaces become privatized, when historical neighborhoods have to give way to “modern” districts, and when glamorous megaprojects are recklessly carried out.

The Heinrich Böll Foundation supports initiatives that work together to make privatized areas publicly accessible again (for example, in Beirut) and to upgrade unplanned settlements in the inner city, so that these living quarters for the poor are no longer at risk of being gentrified by developers (for example, in Lagos).

Reconquering the city: Nahnoo fights for public parks in Lebanon

Horsh Beirut is a beautiful park that stretches over a huge area of 25,000 square meters: Pine trees, palm trees, meadows, 900 different plants, asphalt paths, and even a small stage. Located in the middle of the Lebanese capital, it would be an ideal local recreational area for the urban population.

But joggers and walkers can be seen only around the perimeter of the park. For over twenty years Horsh Beirut has been closed to the general public by municipal authorities. Only “permit holders” are allowed into the park – primarily Western foreigners or people with good connections to the park administration.

Horsh Beirut is no exception in Beirut. “There is the trend to privatize the most beautiful sections of the beach,” says Bente Scheller, director of the Heinrich Böll Foundation’s Middle East office in Beirut. “More and more parks and public spaces have been taken away from the general population. People can hardly meet anywhere now besides shopping centers.”

For this reason, the Heinrich Böll Foundation supports organizations and campaigns that seek to re-conquer the city for its residents. One of them is Nahnoo, Arabic for “we,” a small NGO whose campaigns include opening the Horsh Beirut park. “Try to imagine this discrimination: It is your city, your park, and yet you aren’t allowed to go in,” says Mohammed Ayoub, director of Nahnoo. “It is as if you said to the people: You don’t deserve something like this.”

Such messages have devastating effects on the population’s trust in democracy. Lebanon has weakly developed government structures. It has never really recovered from the years of civil war. The country is still divided – into different population groups which essentially correspond to the former war parties, a half million Palestinian refugees who live without citizenship or rights, and Syrian refugees who currently comprise about one-third of the country’s inhabitants.

Most of them continue to have more trust in their own ethnic-religious group than in the government – which is not surprising, as the postwar order set out in the Ta’if Agreement establishes a strict proportionality in parliament of eighteen different religious confessions. Without public spaces, these different sectors of the population have as little chance of encountering each another as people of different social backgrounds. Thus prejudices and fragmentation continue to be reinforced.

“Public spaces, that is, parks, beaches, and squares, are like the living room in a home,” says Ayoub. “Without this living room there is no place where one can meet, communicate, and dispute.” A democratic society needs precisely such public spaces in order to function, Ayoub emphasizes. “Democracy is more than just elections.”

Through campaigns, demonstrations, and public picnics, Nahnoo and the other NGOs supported by the Heinrich Böll Foundation are working to have the Horsh Beirut park reopened and to create new public spaces. But beyond this they are also seeking to reverse the privatization. A series of beaches are commercially run, charge entry fees, and do not per-

mit visitors to bring food in with them. “Many middle-class families can no longer afford to spend time together outside,” says Bente Scheller.

In the entire city of Beirut, there is only one single public access to the Mediterranean Sea, Ramlet al-Beida, a small, dirty beach. Every other beach is privately owned. Meanwhile public pressure has caused to the city of Beirut to at least promise to buy back land. And there has also been progress in the debate about the Horsh Beirut park. The argument that the park has to be protected from vandalism is mentioned less frequently. Municipal authorities have reluctantly begun looking for a company that could maintain the park. “I believe that Horsh Beirut will be reopened in the near future,” says Ayoub optimistically. “It requires time and patience.”

Upgrade instead of demolition: Makoko’s inhabitants open the eyes of urban planners

Even since reports about Makoko first appeared in architectural magazines, the Nigerian settlement has occasionally been compared to Venice. There are, however, no palaces in Makoko, only houses on stilts perched above the water. When more and more people poured into the fishing village and all the land was taken, newcomers moved onto the water of the shallow lagoon. Several thousand people currently live in this water community in Lagos, a city of sixteen million. It is an independent urban cosmos, designed with a wealth of ideas and ingenuity. The inhabitants have found ways to live on and from the water. Six-year-olds steer their own canoes between buildings; women have learned how to cook and navigate at the same time.

As practical as these people are, their existence remains precarious. Catching and processing fish brings little or no profit, and there are bottlenecks in the water and energy supply. Waste is rarely removed, usually ending up in the already stinking brackish water. The water level has risen due to climate change, leading to flooding. Because of the settlement’s attractive location on the lagoon coast, the people of Makoko are a thorn in the side of “modern” politicians and property developers. Thus, they live in constant fear of forced evictions. In 2012, however, the people began to abandon this defensive mentality. The Heinrich Böll Foundation had teamed up with Kunlé Adeyemi, a cosmopolitan Nigerian architect with an office in Amsterdam, a city that has learned to thrive from the water around it. A study that proposed building a floating school for Makoko was warmly received. The ideas were pioneering: to live with the water instead of trying to defeat it, to use local materials and renewable energy, and to regard waste and wastewater as raw materials.

The Heinrich Böll Foundation contacted a local office of the United Nations and in October 2012 construction of the school was begun using UN climate funds. In early March 2013 the building was completed, at



The Makoko floating community in Lagos, Nigeria Photo: Rainer Wozny

- ▶ a cost of only 6,250 US dollars. No wonder there was a lot of dancing at the inauguration: “The boat remained steady while the event rocked,” the architect’s website reported.

The construction of the school almost didn’t take place. In July 2012 the city demanded that a group of people living on the lagoon leave their homes within seventy-two hours. Protected by police, men with machetes destroyed the wooden houses, while residents were barely able to load their possessions onto their boats. During the five-day confrontation, one man was shot and killed by the police. In response to the abruptly terminated attempt to sink part of their neighborhood, the people living in the stilts houses decided to upgrade their settlement. With the assistance of the Social and Economic Rights Action Center (SERAC) – a human rights organization – the Heinrich Böll Foundation initiated a volunteer work group to develop and discuss ideas. SERAC had represented the community repeatedly in court, when attempts were made to evict residents. The lawyers and social workers thus were quite aware of how life in Makoko functioned and who held sway. National and international architects and urban planners were also invited to collaborate.

With support from the Heinrich Böll Foundation, Fabienne Hölzel, a Swiss architect and founder of Fabulous Urban, became involved. She developed a strategy for neighborhood centers that could assume a variety of functions and provide especially the women of Makoko with opportunities for income and further education: simple floating biogas plants that would produce cheap energy to be used, among other things, to smoke fish. Vegetables would be grown in small hanging gardens. The centers were to be solidly built and have an upper floor as a safe haven during flooding. There had never been anything like this in the huge metropolis. City authorities tend to discuss their ideas within their own narrow circles and then implement them quickly without much ado. Now

staff members from the three participating ministries and the environmental committee of the House of Representatives were invited to the district. Thus began a productive learning process for both sides, as was reflected in the resulting plans.

The final version was presented to the Ministry of Physical Planning and Urban Development in October 2013: the Makoko-Iwaya Waterfront Regeneration Plan. A few months later a small hearing took place at the ministry, which went well. With the official presentation of the plan, the government could no longer argue that there was “no alternative” to the demolition of the district in order for the city as a whole to develop in a positive direction.

Meanwhile the first neighborhood center for women has been built with the help of private donations. During the construction there were continually new challenges to be mastered, as processes of selection and decision-making are not well developed within the community. As yet, women have hardly played a role. It seems that the authoritarian decision-making structures so frequently found among politicians are even more deeply seated among ordinary city residents.

The plans for the water city have in the meantime gained international renown. Parts were exhibited at the international architecture biennales in Venice and Rotterdam in 2014. At the opening day in Rotterdam there was a panel discussion for experts in attendance on the participatory development of local solutions – organized by Fabulous Urban and the Heinrich Böll Foundation. A staff member from the Ministry of Physical Planning in Lagos was also invited; national pride can also be a good source of motivation. ■■■

Expertise and awareness: How to find the right issues and the right tone in each country

Anyone who wants to promote democracy in another country would do well to consider very precisely where, when, and with whom this objective is supposed to be achieved. Crucial for the success of this kind of work are the political parameters, always and everywhere. They influence the options of the foundation's work and even more so the selection of target groups and partners.

Approaches to democracy assistance can be very different: intervening for human rights, encouraging the active engagement of citizens, strengthening civil society, preparing and observing elections, supporting democratically legitimate parliaments, and establishing and expanding institutions that ensure public discussion and control.

The Heinrich Böll Foundation's democracy assistance assumes specific forms and strategies in each country, always consciously operating at several levels in order to collaborate with their often very courageous partners in expanding political and social participation. Five examples from South Africa, Chile, Afghanistan, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and elsewhere in Europe illustrate how diverse and varied democracy assistance can and must be.

#1 We are the state: In everyday life in *South Africa* democracy must repeatedly be fought for anew

South Africa's democracy was hard won. For more than one hundred years people of all skin colors, especially the black inhabitants, fought against the apartheid system. Sympathetic people around the world followed and supported them. In 1994 all South Africans voted for the first time, electing Nelson Mandela as president. A new constitution was passed in 1996. With its extensive bill of rights, it is one of the most progressive constitutions in the world. To ensure that citizens can really exercise their rights, there is not only an independent constitutional court, but also state institutions that strengthen democracy and monitor the government. According to chapter nine of the constitution, these include a human rights commission, a public protector, and a commission for gender equality.

These issues have been the strategic focal point of the Heinrich Böll Foundation's regional office in Cape Town. Together with its partners, the foundation has fought to consolidate democratic institutions and to enable citizens to effect changes. This begins with the Parliamentary Monitoring Group (PMG), an NGO that observes the South African parliament. Here citizens can learn who has actually been assigned to their electoral district, as they vote only for

party lists. Representatives elected in this way are more interested in courting the favor of party leadership than in representing their constituency. That is one reason why representatives of the all-powerful African National Congress (ANC) only very rarely express criticism or demand accountability.

To ensure that members of parliament always debate and act in a gender-sensitive way, the Heinrich Böll Foundation supports feminist training for young women in political parties, also with the goal of promoting nonpartisan cooperation. An example of practical gender awareness is the feminist analysis of the budget; between 2009 and 2014 representatives received training on this issue. Since 2011, South African president Jacob Zuma's state of the nation addresses have been dissected annually by a team of experienced feminists on behalf of the Women's Legal Center (WLC).

When parliamentarians of the governing majority move in the wrong direction, the Heinrich Böll Foundation – together with its partners and many others – offers resistance. The Traditional Courts Bill, initially formulated in 2008, proposed giving extensive rights to traditional chiefs in rural areas. According to the bill, seventeen million South Africans in the

former Bantustans would be subject to the will and decisions of traditional chiefs; under these authorities, who are conservative in terms gender politics, women stood to lose a number of rights included in South Africa's constitution. Opponents of the proposed law (including Heinrich Böll Foundation partners) were so competent and convincing that even ANC-ruled provinces refused to support the bill. The government, however, has continued to try to push it through. A slightly revised version of the bill is currently being considered in parliament. The government wants to win over the chiefs, whose support it needs in the rural areas because it continues to lose support in the cities. This is why the chiefs were given a hefty salary increase.

A broad alliance has also been able to impede another bill proposed by the government. The Protection of State Information Bill, also called the Secrecy Bill, would allow state officials to declare parts of

ously designating their crimes as "corrective rape." The Heinrich Böll Foundation has fought against the exclusion and persecution of sexual minorities for many years and on many levels and has been a dependable partner for many LGBTI groups in South Africa and in other countries as well. Over the past years the foundation has joined forces with civil society groups seeking to establish a dialogue with religious and traditional leaders. Inclusive and Affirmative Ministries (IAM) is active among churches and The Inner Circle (TIC) works in Muslim communities. In 2015 the foundation's Cape Town office organized the first event with gay and lesbian sangomas, or traditional healers. Since many South Africans go to sangomas for advice in dealing with everyday issues, family problems, and spiritual needs, the latter are able to influence social perceptions.

"The rights of nonheterosexual people may appear to many to be a marginal issue," says Layla Al-Zubaidi, director of the Heinrich Böll Foundation office in Cape Town, "especially in a country whose constitution explicitly regards sexual diversity as a basic right and is considered exemplary for this reason. That makes all the more serious the fact that lesbians have to fear for their lives. Politicians, the police, and the courts do little about the rapes and murders of women that are committed daily – lesbian or not."

Because the apartheid state denied basic services to the nonwhite population, "service delivery" has for many people become the practical measuring stick for a functioning democracy. During local elections in May 2011, there was a veritable "toilet war" between the ruling ANC and the opposition Democratic Alliance (DA), which also involved the Human Rights Commission and South African courts.

The DA, which rules in Cape Province, claims that it governs better and "delivers" more than the ANC, which is dominant in the rest of the country. But Cape Town stinks just as much, because the roadside toilets in the informal settlements are not emptied and cleaned on a regular basis. This was pointed out by the Social Justice Coalition, a Heinrich Böll Foundation partner organization, which inspected the toilets in the Khayelitsha township in April 2013 and was able to prove to the city that the company hired to clean the toilets had not performed the work properly. The performance of the sanitary services is now monitored with the help of social media and wireless technology under the slogan "imali yethu" ("it's our money" in Xhosa). A second social audit of toilet cleaning took place in July 2014. In another in October 2013, citizen evaluators looked at waste collection and also found discrepancies between the services commissioned and what was actually done.

Ndifuna Ukwazi (NU), another partner organization of the Heinrich Böll Foundation, presented a shadow report on the South African police in December 2013. Following a long campaign with several partners, a commission finally investigated the po-

"An example of practical gender awareness is the feminist analysis of the budget."

their work a state secret; anyone making these public would be subject to harsh punishment. A broad coalition of citizen movements led by the Right2Know Campaign (R2K) was able to force the government to make numerous concessions, thereby defusing the bill.

Enabling civil society to exert influence on parliament is also part of the Cape Town office's program. Heinrich Böll Foundation partner Equal Education (a young, but already renowned movement for better schooling) has been rather successful with parliamentary committees. Seven of eight recommendations it made were accepted at consultations and included in the basic education law. Another reason Equal Education is so highly regarded is that the organization not only takes on politicians but also organizes very practical improvements, such as the campaign for functional school libraries. With support from the Heinrich Böll Foundation, the NGO Corruption Watch has examined conditions at schools since January 2013. By April 2014, 950 reported transgressions had been investigated, with eighty percent classified as corruption.

In South Africa the battle against gender-based violence addresses very concrete and painful abuses. In global comparative statistics, the country ranks quite high on this issue. Together with the National Shelter Movement and with support from the EU, the Heinrich Böll Foundation is seeking to establish well-equipped women's shelters for victims who have experienced or been threatened with violence.

Although the South African constitution prohibits discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, there have been repeated hate crimes in the country against lesbians, with the perpetrators self-right-

lice in Khayelitsha. Because the township residents feel the police are ineffective, there have been repeated cases of vigilante justice.

From parliament to roadside toilets, professional democracy assistance operates on different levels. The citizens of the country themselves, however, have to claim the democracy, but only people who are connected to others can mobilize. The high cost of telecommunications can be an impediment here. Mobile telephones in South Africa are virtually controlled by two telephone companies and are therefore quite expensive. In response, R2K has started a campaign for lower telecommunications charges called Vula ma Connexion.

Being well connected does not automatically mean you have access to decision makers. That, too, has to be organized. People's Power – People's Parliament, a conference held in August 2012, brought together nine of the most important and most experienced civil society organizations with the goal of establishing a constructive dialogue with South Africa's parliaments at the regional and the national level.

The expertise and engagement of NGOs are indispensable if a democracy is to function for the benefit of its citizens. But these professionals of civil society do not, for the most part, represent the grass roots of society. As those largely excluded from development in South Africa begin to organize – for instance, into movements of the unemployed, the landless, and the homeless – the Heinrich Böll Foundation has invited different organizations to form a joint platform for social justice. More than fifty organizations are involved, including NGOs, social movements, and previously “invisible” local initiatives such as Gays and Lesbians of Rustenburg (a mining city in the North West Province). Together they need to be strong so that they can step on the government's toes: Awethu – for the people!

Such action is urgently needed, for South Africa's young democracy has already started to look pretty old in many respects. Voter participation has declined and the right to vote needs reforming. Citizens have noted with bitterness that the wealthy are able to lead a good life at the cost of everyone else, that there are problems with services, and that the police shoot at protesting citizens. At the same time, however, the media analyzes all of this with great passion and sharp commentary. These voices are barely perceptible abroad. International interest in South Africa, once so great, has dwindled. For this reason, the Heinrich Böll Foundation office in Cape Town and the headquarters in Berlin have worked to ensure that these voices are heard in Germany. In 2012 the hundredth anniversary of the ANC was celebrated for the entire year with a web dossier, in which South African authors commented on the development of the former liberation movement. At events in Berlin, young intellectuals of the Midrand Group soberly dis-

sected the ANC and explained to the audience – long-time sympathizers of the former liberation movement – that the ANC has split into deeply divided factions and that its sizeable majority in parliament has made it quite arrogant. They sharply castigated the corruption raging domestically and abroad and criticized the government for not doing more for poor South Africans despite its abundant tax revenues. A documentary film by Rehad Desai about the police massacre of miners in Marikana (Miners Shot Down), shown at the Heinrich Böll Foundation headquarters in early June 2014, also shocked viewers in Berlin. Older members of the audience were reminded of images from the apartheid era.

#2 Against the colonization of politics: Democracy assistance in extractivist countries (for example, Chile)

Twenty-five years after returning to formal democratic structures, Chile is currently experiencing the most profound crisis of the post-authoritarian era. It is not only a crisis of representation and legitimacy, but also a general systemic crisis that calls into question democratic institutions and basic values. Comparative studies on democracy and corruption, however, do not seem to have registered this. Rankings such as the Bertelsmann Transformation Index (which examines citizen rights and the functioning of democratic institutions) and the Corruption Perceptions Index (which is issued by Transparency International and analyzes the perceptions of citizens) continue to give Chile exemplary scores.

The extensive undermining of democratic decision-making structures and the colonization of politics by the interests of mining companies and agro-business have been consistently excluded from these rankings. According to current information (which does not include all of the major companies involved), in the run-up to the previous elections more than one-third of all parliamentarians of both chambers and their staff received “allocations” from large corporations for services that they demonstrably did not render. As a result, corporations – whose tax burden is already quite moderate – have reduced their tax payments and the independence of members of parliament has now been called into question.

A bill on glacier protection is an especially blatant example. Due to pressure from the National Copper Corporation of Chile (CODELCO) on the relevant parliamentary commission, the bill was significantly watered down: According to the revised proposal the only glaciers granted legal protection were located in nature preserves in southern Chile, whereas glaciers in central Chile and in the north – where CODELCO has mining interests – are excluded from protection.



Protest for free and better education in Chile Photo: simenon

- Numerous representatives who had been involved in drafting the previous legislation revoked their support for it. The cloak and dagger operation suggests that the sudden change of opinion arose through pressure or “incentives” from the mining lobby. This scheme, however, managed to be subsequently thwarted through a successful communication campaign and the mobilization of a group of critical parliamentarians who had not (yet) changed sides.

Similar examples of the colonization of politics by corporate interests can be seen in the water, energy, fishing, and mining sectors. It is no easy task to find pockets of democratic resistance in Chile because there are limited possibilities for articulating critical perspectives. The press is almost completely in the hands of two right-wing corporations, while civil society continues to be atomized and poorly organized. In the face of a corrupt parliament, an equally implicated government team, an only partially independent judiciary, and a fragmented civil society, the Heinrich Böll Foundation office in Cono Sur supports reform initiatives on various levels.

The foundation works together with former activists from student protests on several interconnected projects. In 2013, the Manifesto for a New Educational Policy (iniciativa compromiso por una nueva educación) project was initiated by the Fundación Nodo XXI, a foundation established by leaders of the student protest movement. The project has developed into an action and discussion platform that

critically monitors the government’s educational reform program. The platform consists of student representatives, educational administrators, teachers, and independent educational experts. Its goal is to implement education as a universal social right that is the responsibility of society as a whole. Until now access to education in Chile has frequently been dependent on the economic situation of one’s parents. In the largely privatized educational system, interest in profit predominates, with deleterious effects on the quality of education. As the former student protest leaders emphasize, participation in education is not only an essential prerequisite for social and economic participation, but also for active political involvement.

While the privatization of the educational system is a legacy of the military dictatorship that non-authoritarian governments have yet to alter, the privatization of the water sector is a problem that has become even more acute in the post-authoritarian era. Although the government blames climate change for water shortages in several regions of Chile that are not yet part of the desert zones, it is now sufficiently clear that river water is being illegally diverted and redirected into illegal underground canal systems, chiefly by huge mining projects and agro-business, thereby robbing thousands of small farmers of their livelihood. Even in the water-rich region of Araucanía, where the majority of the Chilean Mapuche population lives, numerous communities have to be

supplied with water by tank trucks. Business is booming and the mayors are frequently accomplices of the corporations. The water deliveries are portrayed as “good deeds” for the affected citizens – an attempt to establish clientelist networks of dependency that can be exploited in elections.

Chile’s glaciers represent one of the most important freshwater reserves in the country; seventy percent of the river water is meltwater, which is why the battle for water recovery also has to encompass the protection of glaciers. The Heinrich Böll Foundation’s regional office works here on two levels. First, it supports NGOs (such as the environmental organizations Terram and Chile Sustentable) that lobby political decision-makers and raise public awareness. Second, the foundation cooperates with FIMA (Fiscalia del Medio Ambiente), an NGO that provides training and continuing education not only for environmental lawyers but also for judges. The “glacier group” coordinated by Chile Sustentable includes FIMA and Terram, as well as the Decide Foundation (which serves as a bridge between leftist and green NGOs), Greenpeace, and the advisors of several members of parliament. This interdisciplinary team, which includes environmental lawyers, hydrologists, journalists, and engineers, meets once a week in the rooms of the Heinrich Böll Foundation’s Cono Sur office in order to coordinate lobbying and public relations.

Given the extensive colonization of politics by mining and agro-export interests, the foundation’s work cannot be limited to influencing political decision-makers through expert groups. The regional office also collaborates with the social movement MODATIMA (Movimiento de Defensa por el Acceso al Agua, la Tierra y la Protección del Medio Ambiente). The movement arose in the Petorca Province, a fertile area of the central valley north of Santiago that had been characterized primarily by small-scale agriculture. With the increasing expansion of large-scale avocado plantations, which are grown for export and use large amounts of water, these small farmers have lost their livelihood. Entire communities have no water; the water supply can be ensured only through tank trucks, while large corporations use illegal water tanks and pipelines. Due to the diversion of river water to the plantations, residents located downriver have had no water for years.

MODATIMA is not only one of the leading forces of the national water movement, it also provides outstanding continuing education. It fights for the establishment of water rights in affected communities and runs a countrywide continuing education program for communities suffering from water shortages. The target groups for this are small-scale farmers who (can) make an essential contribution to food sovereignty and, in contrast to the large plantations, use sustainable and ecological cultivation methods. MODATIMA combines reclaiming water as a basic

right with a discussion of the meaning of public assets. Article 19 of the constitution passed under the military government permits the privatization of water and the concentration of rights of disposal into a few hands. For this reason MODATIMA has become a voice for a constitutional amendment.

Rodrigo Mundaca, one of the leaders of the movement, was sentenced to a prison term for slander in 2014. He had publicly accused former interior minister Edmundo Pérez Yoma, one of the large landholders, of stealing water. The Chilean justice system regards water theft merely as an administrative offense. In a nationwide act of solidarity, Mundaca’s bail was paid in one-peso coins. The persecution of Mundaca, however, was not limited to the legal domain. An unidentified assailant attacked him with an iron rod in broad daylight in the middle of Santiago. To date the half-hearted police investigations have produced no results. MODATIMA, however, refuses to let itself be intimidated.

The Heinrich Böll Foundation also works in close coordination with Defensoria del Pueblo to protect the water activists. This organization of lawyers represents victims of human rights violations who cannot afford their own defense. The foundation office has also helped improve the water activists’ networking, which, on the one hand, raises the visibility and thus the legal protection of activists and, on the other hand, facilitates sharing experiences and optimizing local strategies. Even if the privatization of the water sector in neighboring countries has not been carried out as radically, access to water as a basic right and public asset will become an increasingly important part of the foundation’s regional work in the coming years.

#3 On difficult terrain: Work in Afghanistan

Afghanistan: Moving forward or lost in governance confusion?

More than a decade after the fall of the Taliban regime and the beginning of the international intervention, Afghanistan has changed dramatically. Infrastructure, roads, and markets have been built. Women participate in political and public life. Children attend schools. The governance structure has matured and the withdrawal of international troops has led to the Afghan state assuming full responsibility for security.

One of the most remarkable steps in the process of state-building in Afghanistan was scheduled for 2014: the first peaceful transfer of power from one president to a democratically elected successor since 1933. In April 2014, during the run-up to the elections, the excitement among Afghan citizens could

not have been greater. People's hopes were high, and women and men turned out in huge numbers to vote.

But it was not meant to be. The run-off election between the final candidates (Ashraf Ghani and Abdullah Abdullah) turned into a heated debate on election rigging and threatened to divide their supporters along historical, political, and ethnic lines. The attempt to prevent political collapse led to an internationally brokered power-sharing agreement in September 2014. This agreement created an additional post alongside the position of president – that of chief executive officer, a de facto prime minister – as part of a national unity government. Due to rivalries between the two officials, however, nominations for a new cabinet have yet to be finalized. Moreover, the ongoing political rift over required changes in electoral legislation led to the postponement of parliamentary elections scheduled for mid-2015. Without a functioning cabinet and with the current parliament having no legislative function, the country has come to a standstill in terms of governance. The mood among the Afghan people has changed from euphoria over their power to choose their own government to uncertainty about whether recent political developments might again lead the country into a state of conflict.

One step towards changing this situation would be a revision of the constitutional framework. As a peace agreement with the armed opposition is currently unlikely, human rights activists fear that reopening the debate on the constitution might lead to a curtailing of the rights to freedom of speech and equal participation, for which they have fought hard. Protecting these rights would require firm commitment from international supporters, but the international community's attention is steadily drifting away from Afghanistan and towards other volatile regions.

How to stay relevant in Afghanistan?

The Heinrich Böll Foundation and its partners have been faced with two opposing trends in Afghanistan: in the beginning, a rush to democratize the country through constantly shifting aid and development paradigms pushed by international stakeholders; and afterwards, an eagerness to swiftly hand over leadership to Afghan actors – as if democratization had never been declared as a long-term process.

The Heinrich Böll Foundation's willingness to balance conflicting approaches regarding project implementation has enabled it to maintain an essential level of trust in the leadership capabilities of its partners. With political frameworks changing on a regular basis and development concepts being frequently replaced by new and supposedly advanced theories of democratization, it was this trust dividend between the foundation and its Afghan partners that ensured that the foundation's work remained relevant. Afghan civil society still turns to the Heinrich Böll

Foundation when it needs politically nonpartisan spaces – often unavailable elsewhere – that make it possible to work out new ideas, visions, and concepts.

Consistency while remaining flexible

The Heinrich Böll Foundation started its activities in Afghanistan in 2003 and has worked together with The Liaison Office (TLO) from the very beginning. Cooperation with TLO began following the request of a group of tribal elders from southeast Afghanistan. The elders felt neglected, lacked formalized institutional setups, and had no access to the newly introduced governance structures and the international community's funding mechanisms. The development paradigms of the time left little space for supporting traditional structures as part of a modern peace and state-building project.

By 2009, TLO had developed from an idea into an organization, with several hundred staff members implementing multiple million-dollar projects. Concentrating on social science research, TLO advised many previously skeptical international actors on how to enter a specific region without damaging the social and cultural context. The irony was not lost on TLO: "What once was approached with hesitance all of a sudden was uncritically embraced. What once used to be seen as challenge to the modern state-building project all of a sudden appeared as a silver bullet to the woes of international efforts in battling a reemerging insurgency" (TLO Policy Brief 3, 2015). This led to a shift in the perception of TLO: initially criticized for working with traditional structures, it subsequently became "the voice of caution" to those who now uncritically adopted the new approach.

Since the withdrawal of international troops started, decreases in funding from international donors have forced TLO to reduce its operations and shift its focus from research back to advocacy. The organization is now finding its place as a knowledgeable stakeholder in the field of access to justice, focusing on integrating traditional customs into modern legal structures, i.e., the *jirga/shura* traditions into the court systems.

The partnership with TLO has changed over the years, from the foundation providing support to a pilot project in 2003 to TLO becoming a true political ally in discussions on democracy, security, and development on both national and international levels in 2015. Whereas in the beginning the Heinrich Böll Foundation advised TLO on organizational restructuring and how to focus its programmatic approach, now TLO advises the foundation on how to understand the highly complex context that is present-day Afghanistan.

Besides support for smaller policy- and advocacy-related projects, developments in the relationship have also led TLO representatives to become involved in the Heinrich Böll Foundation's initiatives

on many levels. This involvement ranges from steering an environmental network to participating in international delegations and conferences and in high-level bilateral meetings to convey recommendations from Afghan civil society about the future development of their country to the US Department of State, the European Parliament, and NATO headquarters in Brussels.

Guidance while providing participatory spaces

The partnership between the Heinrich Böll Foundation and TLO has also resulted in another project: a dialogue with Afghan youth. Following a visit by a high-ranking US official to Afghanistan, the foundation and TLO organized an exchange process between representatives of a number of youth networks. These groups were actively promoting the various presidential candidates, but they had yet to begin coordinating their efforts. An initial meeting indicated that although the networks were lobbying for different candidates, they were all striving for the same goal: the inclusion of young Afghans' political visions and interests in decision- and policy-making at the national level. These groups then approached the Heinrich Böll Foundation and TLO in order to further facilitate their own moves towards establishing a platform to systematically share ideas and strategically clarify the political vision and interests of young people in Afghanistan.

How can the passion, creativity, and novel ideas of young people be reconciled with the sensibility and experience of the older generations? How can young Afghans challenge their leaders – and how can leaders be encouraged to challenge younger members of society – as part of a mutually respectful dialogue? In Afghanistan, where there is little positive historical experience of channelling the concerns of young people into constructive political dialogue, answering these questions was particularly challenging.

During the next phases of the project, a growing number of youth groups and networks (fourteen overall) met regularly. Eventually the meetings included Afghan politicians, academics, and prominent civil society activists who helped foster inter-generational engagement and provide expert input and recommendations. A policy brief that presented young people's political participation, their role in nation-building, their vision, and their platforms attracted the attention of relevant government and nongovernment institutions, leading to the inclusion of some of their recommendations in the draft national youth policy. A selected core group went on to present their recommendations to the new president and the chief executive officer.

Patience and trust in Afghan leadership

The work of the Heinrich Böll Foundation in Afghanistan is defined by a number of aspects: These include turning to tribal elders, young people, women,

and human rights activists – as well as to members of communities surrounding mining sites as regards work on resource politics and equity – and addressing them within their individual contexts, rather than involving established civil society organizations, and supporting them to set up multiple offices. It also entails listening carefully to the interests of these actors and enabling them to demand changes in political structures and conditions – eschewing outside indicators and goals as quick fixes to achieve programmatic outcomes. The foundation's work in Afghanistan also involves providing a protected and impartial space for dialogue about conflicting opinions instead of trying to determine the direction

“The foundation's work in Afghanistan also involves providing a protected and impartial space for dialogue about conflicting opinions instead of trying to determine the direction of a process and claiming its international ownership.”

of a process and claiming its international ownership. The foundation does not seek to organize large budgets for selective projects that collapse as soon as this external funding is withdrawn, but supports instead voluntarism and sustainable processes. This means trusting the capabilities of (long-term) partners, rather than allowing them to be diminished by the winds of new developmental directions designed at the international level and claiming to know which capabilities Afghan actors really need.

#4 Breaking through the blockade: An ethnic straitjacket paralyzes the democratization of *Bosnia-Herzegovina*

After the Dayton Agreement in 1995, Bosnia-Herzegovina received significant support from the international community, which sent stabilization troops to secure the fragile peace and established the Office of the High Representative, which was to oversee civic affairs and was given extensive powers for this. A lot of money was made available to rebuild the country. The UN and many nations offered consulting as well as assistance through their aid and development organizations.

Twenty years later interest has dwindled. The smoldering conflict is frustrating and the unwillingness of Bosnia's elite to reform, exasperating. There is no sign of development, and instead of rapprochement there are old and new forms of mistrust. The population is suffering and losing hope that things

will change for the better. More and more frequently the talk is not merely about crisis; many already regard Bosnia as a “failed state.”

The roots of these problems were already evident in the Dayton Agreement. The Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina (laid out in Annex 4) established a construct that enables nationalist groups to block legislation and prevents the emergence of a democratic and multiethnic society. The country was divided into two “entities”: the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, inhabited primarily by Bosnian Croats and Bosniaks, and the Serbian Republic for the majority of Bosnian Serbs. These two entities have extensive autonomy, each with a prime minister and sixteen ministries. The Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, in turn, is divided into ten cantons, which are also organized according to ethnic proportionality. The over-arching central state of Bosnia-Herzegovina also has a joint government and a joint parliament, but with only limited power.

Identity politics

The three “constituent peoples” have access to posts and positions according to an ethnic quota system and have significant veto power for any political decision deemed contrary to the vital national interest of the respective community. This provokes blocked legislation and makes compromises difficult. Thus the short-term interests of political parties or ethnicities determine policies, while a shared notion about the development of the country has not yet developed.

The consequence of the prevailing identity politics is that the system does not incorporate and represent different socioeconomic interests. It also fails to react to developing social needs, but instead maintains the dominance of political elites, who have also been able to establish themselves comfortably in economic terms. Such a system reinforces political patronage, gives rise to a mushrooming, ineffective bureaucracy, obstructs self-sustaining economic growth, encourages endemic corruption, and leads to the squandering of public funds. Conversely, it impedes rapprochement across (ethnic) borders and makes moderate politicians look weak. The system has proved resistant even where changes to facilitate the desired entry into the EU are urgently needed. Already in 2003, Bosnia and Herzegovina was recognized as a potential applicant country for EU accession. In 2009, however, two citizens of the country – Jacob Finci, a Bosnian Jew, and Dervo Sejdic, a Bosnian Roma – successfully appealed to the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR), arguing that because they did not belong to any of the three “constituent peoples,” they were unable – as “others” – to run for a position in the tripartite state presidency or in the second chamber of the joint parliament (the House of Peoples). The constitutional reform urged by the European Union in response has yet to be adopted. It is an ominous sign that on June 1,

2015, the EU nevertheless implemented the Stabilization and Association Accord (SAA) already signed in 2008 and was satisfied with a vague declaration of intention regarding “reforms.” “The governing elite have successfully resisted every major change,” complains Mirela Grünther-Đečević, former director of the Heinrich Böll Foundation’s office in Sarajevo. “If the international community is not prepared to become more involved in Bosnia and Herzegovina and if the most important actor – the EU – does not have a consistent strategy and course of action, politicians in the country will not be forced to make changes.”

The Heinrich Böll Foundation has frequently addressed the role of the international community in very concrete terms – with sound information and political analyses – and has outlined the weaknesses and proposed alternatives. The central goal here has been to establish a critical public dialogue and a direct relationship between international players and the organized citizens of Bosnia-Herzegovina. While they have consulted with select organizations to evaluate the situation in the country, the truly important decisions are made far removed from civil society and the public.

In the EU integration process, the EU has supported civil society, but has regarded it more as a “service provider” and failed to include it sufficiently in the political debates and negotiations. In order to stimulate the paralyzed EU integration process “from below” and shake up this relationship, the Heinrich Böll Foundation has supported the Initiative for Monitoring the EU Integration Process from the outset. The thirty-one organizations of the initiative have worked together to develop alternative reports to the official EU progress evaluations. In this way members of the initiative have become important contacts – for the Members of the European Parliament and EU politicians as well as for the local media.

Governance in Bosnia-Herzegovina is fundamentally opaque, regardless of political orientation; the most important decisions are made beyond the realm of procedures and formal institutions that are at least partially accessible to the public. For years the Heinrich Böll Foundation has supported various forms of civic engagement in order to incorporate citizens into decision-making processes. This engagement has focused on participation in decisions on environmental issues. The goal has been to inform the local population and responsible authorities about environmental protection and the principles of sustainable development or to increase their knowledge in these matters. More recently, the significance of public assets and public space has also been addressed. Thus initiatives for sustained urban development were established in Banja Luka and in Sarajevo, the first of their kind in the country. The Center for Environment in Banja Luka is also active outside the city as a competency center for issues concerning



Remembering the victims of Srebrenica Photo: RNW.org

citizen participation in approving spatial planning documents.

The Heinrich Böll Foundation wants to promote intervention as a constructive alternative. One particularly important dimension of this is making citizens aware of their rights and how to exercise them. Only then can they demand accountability and effect changes, and only then can the general rancor toward the government and politicians be channeled in constructive directions. Especially important in this regard are young people, who suffer most from the general lack of prospects and political apathy and are therefore drawn to radical authoritarian and violent “solutions.”

At the same time, civil activists are trained in media competency and public relations to be able to carve out space in the media – against the significantly more appealing lowbrow competition – and attract public interest. This is possible only through creative forms of collaboration with the media and the development of independent programs. Thus together with its project partners the Heinrich Böll Foundation has conceived radio and television shows that address marginalized issues and succeed through information and expertise.

Recently established initiatives show that the foundation’s long years of intensive work have not been a fight against windmills. The Initiative for Free Declaration has successfully protested against phrasing used in the 2013 census that did not leave adequate space for civic (as opposed to ethnic) self-identification. The citizens’ initiative The Park is Ours was formed in response to a corruption affair in Banja Luka. This group, which seeks to protect public assets from corrupt investments, brought thousands of “šetači” (“walkers,” or demonstrators) onto the

street for months. In recent years, civil society has been increasingly able to exercise its watchdog role.

The political culture of Bosnia-Herzegovina will remain authoritarian and collectivist for the foreseeable future. Despite the fact that much of the population mistrusts politicians, political parties, and institutions, they still seek security in ethnic and national categories. This will change only gradually. The many initiatives show that it is possible for the people of Bosnia-Herzegovina to break away from this and choose a different orientation. As the EU expands its borders to include more and more of Europe, it cannot lower its standards of assessment, but instead must demand that they be maintained.

Few women in politics

Matters are similar regarding women in politics. The percentage of active female politicians, which was low to begin with, has been sinking even lower. A quota of thirty percent, required for all legislative bodies in Bosnia-Herzegovina as of 1998, initially ensured a significant increase in the number of women in parliament. However, proportional representation with open lists, introduced in 2000, subsequently undermined the effectiveness of women’s quotas since voters now influence who gains a seat in parliament. And the electorate wants, first and foremost, to have men in office.

Through continuing education, campaigns, and workshops, the Heinrich Böll Foundation has sought to support committed women from NGOs and political parties. This has occurred in collaboration with INFOHOUSE, the CURE Foundation, and additional partners. Since 2011, 470 women from sixteen political parties, twenty NGOs, and fifteen cities have participated in these activities. Women and NGOs



Traces of the EU in Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina Photo: Andreas Lehner

- ▶ outside the capital city have been particular target groups, as they have fewer opportunities to participate in this kind of project.

Although much has changed for women, things have remained largely the same in terms of gender politics. In the local elections of 2012, twenty-nine women ran as candidates, but only five women were named mayors or municipal leaders. In the national elections in 2014, the legal gender quota – raised again in 2013 to 40 percent – was observed, so that 42 percent of the candidates on the election lists were women, but only nine were elected to the forty-two member joint parliament. In response, the Heinrich Böll Foundation supported a program to educate men from all twelve parliamentary parties – the first of its kind in the country. The program aimed at strengthening the position of women in the social and political domains. And that means, first of all, voting for them.

Being different with equal rights

In an already conservative society that is now marked by war, divided into ethnic identities, and economically stagnated, it takes courage to be openly homosexual and to demand equality. A majority of the population despises gays and lesbians and regards them as “abnormal” and “sick.” This discriminatory attitude is reinforced by the traditional ties between the nationalist political elite and their respective religious communities. Nevertheless there are also people in Bosnia-Herzegovina who dare to speak up and let their fellow citizens know that respect for those who are different is also a part of democracy.

Consequently, the Heinrich Böll Foundation’s Bosnia-Herzegovina office has initiated, together with partner organizations Open Center and the CURE Foundation, a project that raises awareness to LGBT issues and fights homophobia. The project Coming Out! Advocating Promotion and Protection of LGBT Rights, was started in 2013 and is financed by the EU. It has been aimed not only at civil servants, but also at journalists and representatives of civil society. The common goal of the diverse actions has been to raise awareness about the needs and concerns of the LGBT community and to increase the visibility of the community as a whole, so that authorities proactively support equal treatment. Approximately 1,000 police officers in Sarajevo were sensitized to the problems of LGBT people as part of their training; several officers who were demonstratively uninterested in the issue at the beginning of the training sessions had completely changed their attitudes by the end of the course.

#5 Under pressure from many sides: Europe’s democracies and the European Union decline in approval ratings and cohesiveness

Europe is considered a symbol of freedom, democracy, and prosperity. As a community of democratic states it has great inspirational power and is a model for democratic movements worldwide. But in Europe

itself democracy has increasingly come under pressure. This affects the European Union (EU) as a joint institution as well as the individual nation-states that comprise it. The European debt crisis has revived the question of the democratic legitimacy of the European Union. The EU is currently confronted with a dilemma. On the one hand, it has become clear that more joint European policies are necessary and that, for example, there can be no common currency without a common fiscal policy. However, on the other hand, social support for an expanded community of liability and solidarity has dwindled. Many citizens feel that they have no influence on politics and that power increasingly emanates from an anonymous central force “in Brussels,” without sufficient democratic control. Resistance to this is growing.

For a long time the European Union was able to build upon more or less tacit approval. This was owing to the promise of a European union of peace that had brought the bloody chapter of European wars to an end. The guarantee of democracy, freedom of movement, and economic prosperity also contributed to the acceptance of the European Union. However, the debt overload and economic depression in several member states have now plunged the entire EU into a profound crisis, in which many people can no longer see the benefits of the common currency, whereas the disadvantages and risks have become manifest. At the same time, cohesion and trust among European societies has faded. The debt crisis has created new chasms and led to mutual recriminations. Old wounds that appeared to have healed over several decades of European integration have become visible again in the form of national resentments. In this way the debt crisis has expanded into a crisis of trust.

The rise of anti-European and right-wing populist forces puts pressure on many European democracies and increases the forces pulling the EU apart. The debt crisis, which led to economic depression and high unemployment in a number of countries, promotes populist attitudes in society. The political party systems are in upheaval. On the left and, especially, on the right fringes, forces are calling into question liberal democracy and the project of European democracy as a whole. One warning signal was the European elections of 2014. In France, Denmark, and Great Britain, right-wing extremist parties won more than one-quarter of the votes and became the most powerful political force. In a number of other countries, right-wing populist parties established themselves as powerful political actors, receiving between ten and twenty percent of the vote. This trend has subsequently continued in national elections.

These parties may vary in appearance, but they share a fundamental rejection of liberal democracy. They see themselves as a homogeneous group set apart from others, stirring up hatred against homosexuals, foreigners, and immigrants. They incite fear and re-

sentment and support marginalization. They are illiberal and anti-pluralist, and see themselves as the sole true representatives of the “people.” In doing so, they distance themselves from established politics (“we down here vs. they up there”) and criticize representative democracy as elitist rule. Their conception of democracy is nationalist, so they reject all transnational and supranational interconnections, including European integration.

The prevailing disenchantment with politics serves as a breeding ground for populism. Trust in the integrity of the political elite and in democracy as such has been shaken. Basic European values are increasingly called into question not only by populist forces, however, but also by the political elites themselves. In Bulgaria, for example, the interior ministry apparently organized a long-term systematic campaign of tapping conversations of politicians, business people, and other citizens. In Hungary, the Orbán government used its two-thirds majority to pass a constitutional amendment in 2011 significantly reducing the powers of the constitutional court and parliament. It also limited freedom of the press. In the long-established democracies of Europe, such as in Italy and France, there has been increased corruption, attacks on freedom of the press, and interventions compromising the independence of the judiciary.

There is a danger that the large influx of refugees and immigrants into Europe and the as yet insufficient response by EU countries will give a further boost to right-wing populism. The refugee crisis is the next touchstone for Europe. The question of whether EU countries are capable of joint action, solidarity, and self-responsibility, and whether each country can find the proper way of dealing with this great challenge, will determine whether the massive immigration currently taking place leads to political and social upheavals in European societies. The threat of Islamist terrorism challenging the liberal democracies in Europe will also increase the pressure. An additional factor is that Russia is attempting to establish itself in Eastern Europe as an illiberal counter-model and has been seeking alliances with corresponding European forces.

Effects on the foundation’s work for democracy

The developments of recent years show how fragile the European project of peace and democracy is. Because democracy is also contested in Europe, it must always be renewed and defended. Success will depend upon whether citizens are able to see future prospects for themselves. If people no longer trust democratically elected governments and established political parties to ensure economic success, the European crisis will grow into a crisis of democracy. Conversely, however, it is also true that economic success can take the sting out of anti-democratic trends.



Demonstration in Budapest against the Orbán government, October 2014 Photo: Ronan Shenhav

The various facets of the crisis of European democracy have affected the Heinrich Böll Foundation's international work for democracy. Traditionally, this work sought to foster democratization in authoritarian states or states with weakly developed democratic structures – especially through support for civil society. Now we are facing the fact that the democracy question is being raised again also in the established democracies of Europe. Two consequences arise from this.

“There is a danger that the large influx of refugees and immigrants into Europe and the as yet insufficient response by EU countries will give a further boost to right-wing populism. The refugee crisis is the next touchstone for Europe.”

First, work for democracy has once again become necessary within the European Union. In Germany and in Europe there must be a debate about how we want to live together and how we want to organize ourselves democratically. Credible work for democracy outside of Europe presupposes that we also oppose the enemies of an open society at home.

Second, the foundation's international work for democracy is occurring under altered parameters. In emerging countries and in the Global South, the radiant glow of Europe has diminished. The universality of Western notions of democracy has been called into question by systemic competition from rising powers such as China. For societies in the Global South, prosperity and democracy are inextricably connected. If Europe wants to maintain or recover its function as a role model, it must (once again) provide evidence of its recipes for success, so that work for democracy will not be for naught.

Supporting civil society in difficult times, for example, in Hungary

In Hungary, the right-wing populist government of Prime Minister Viktor Orbán has used its two-thirds majority for an authoritarian turn. The new constitution that came into force in 2012, which the Fidesz government passed without involving the opposition, undermined the protection of fundamental rights, weakened the constitutional court, and violated the principle of the religious-ideological neutrality of the state. According to Orbán's own statements, he sought to establish within the EU an “illiberal state” built on national interests that abandons “Western European dogmas.” The government has dealt harshly with NGOs critical of its policies. Against the notion of a plural, open society, Orbán advocates a confrontational majority democracy. Following the attack on the French publication Charlie Hebdo, Orbán criticized European immigration policies and stressed that he did not want any immigrants in Hungary “living among us with a different culture and a different background.”

Shortly thereafter the government stated that it was erecting a four-meter-high fence along the border with Serbia. The election successes of the right-wing extremist Jobbik party (almost 20%) have also contributed to the anti-liberal climate. In the local elections in October 2014, Jobbik was the second-strongest party in eighteen of nineteen counties and also did well in the major cities. The democratic opposition, in contrast, has been marginalized and fragmented.

This is where the Heinrich Böll Foundation has focused its work. It supports efforts to establish a democratic alternative and lend a voice to intellectuals and activists critical of the government who have been working for democratic renewal in Hungary and have increasingly come under pressure. Central concerns include networking with other European partners and exchanging promising strategies



Not without the EU flag: Demonstration in Warsaw against the Duda government, January 2016
Photo: Grzegorz Zukowski

against illiberal and anti-democratic trends in Hungary and in Europe.

Since 2012 the Heinrich Böll Foundation has used the English-language web dossier “Focus on Hungary” to provide information about contemporary political events as well as background analyses (www.boell.de/focus-on-hungary). Authors from Hungary report and comment on a regular basis about the political situation in the country. ↗

“This is our future”: Young voices on the common Eurozone

Hope lies in young people. When the committed Europeans working at the Heinrich Böll Foundation’s office in Brussels noted multiple examples of anti-EU sentiment – Greek caricatures depicting German Chancellor Angela Merkel with a Hitler-moustache and German press reports stereotyping the Greek people as lazy and parasitic – they decided to invite young Europeans to Brussels to talk about the euro crisis and possible solutions. They selected fifteen women and men who seemed ready and willing to discuss these issues with each other and with the responsible authorities in Brussels.

The participants included (prospective) scientists, journalists, the manager of an organic food store, and a philosophy student with a university degree in classics, who currently works at a provincial library in Italy and reads stories aloud to children on Sundays. In addition to the participants and the foundation office, forty other people of a dozen different nationalities took part, including staff and Members of the European Parliament, commission officials, and

representatives of different social groups and political movements.

The young people prepared papers that they then presented and discussed with the invited guests at the different workshops. Answers to major questions were sought: Do austerity measures lead to a North-South divide? What alternatives exist to resolve the euro crisis? What can Europe do to decrease youth unemployment? How can Euroskepticism and populism be countered and where do the new protest movements and social networks stand politically? And finally, how can we fight together in solidarity against the crisis? For four days they worked hard on these questions, and on the fifth day, in a final feat of strength, they all agreed to a series of joint conclusions and recommendations.

The seriousness and creativity of their work were impressive. The Brussels participants, who attended the workshop as busy “experts,” were fascinated by this youthful enthusiasm. One Member of the European Parliament offered – in his language – the highest praise. The project, he said, was “extremely relevant.”

It was clear, however, that this was not the end of the project. Since 2014 the participants have kept a blog on the website of the foundation office in Brussels: “Young Voices of Europe” ↗ ■■■

↗ Link

www.boell.de/focus-on-hungary

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<http://young-voices.boellblog.org>

Without borders: The global participation of civil society

The nation-state is the basic unit of democracy: Citizens elect a government for their country. They find, however, that their lives are influenced as well by decisions made beyond their own capital city – whether as a consequence of economic interdependencies and powerful economic interests or through the effects of legally binding international treaties or international federations and organizations. In the case of the European Union – the most powerful supranational legal framework in the world – this may also produce resentment (against the “elitist and bureaucratic” forces) and the rise of nationally oriented populist political parties. Conversely, however, these connections also provide opportunities to reach agreements beyond territorial borders. Essential impulses for the protection of human rights or the environment have come from and continue to come from the United Nations. Many crises (for example, climate change) can no longer be addressed within the parameters of the nation-state.

“International accords need people everywhere to publicize them and inform people about their rights.”

The central site for discussions among the countries of the world and for global accords is the UN, which for this reason plays an important role in the Heinrich Böll Foundation’s work for democracy. Like national politics, international agreements also require the vigilance, expertise, and engagement of citizens. In a world of power imbalances and marginalization, it is essential that the participation and opinions of people who are usually unable to make themselves heard be incorporated at the international level.

This occurs in various ways and at various levels, both in working out new standards and accords, and in monitoring their drafting and implementation. The Heinrich Böll Foundation observes various UN negotiation processes (for example, in international women’s policy and in the fight against climate change), with the goal of establishing transparency and especially of increasing the opportunities for participation by civil society. As so-called stakeholders, partners in the East and the South do in principle have access to negotiation processes. Frequently, however, they are excluded because they lack the resources to travel or because they do not have sufficient access to information.

International accords such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the UN Women’s Rights Convention CEDAW, and UN resolutions promoting the participation of women in conflict management need people everywhere to publicize them and inform people about their rights. And they also need human rights organizations and women’s organizations to closely monitor whether their respective governments adhere to these international obligations. A number of such organizations compose shadow reports as alternatives to official governmental reports. At the same time, this can increase citizens’ capacity to intervene and power to negotiate. For many, international engagement for human rights and women’s rights is also an important protective mechanism against repression and intimidation at home.

In addition to the UN, international organizations such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the World Trade Organization (WTO) also influence the economics and politics in various countries in crucial ways. Parallel to this, new power centers and so-called clubs of global governance have emerged as agenda-setting forces; the participation of civil society in these new organizations was not intended and had to be fought for and won. These include the Group of Twenty or G20 (industrial and emerging countries), which set the tone for the global economy, and the BRICS countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa). Both new “clubs” also set the parameters for many other nations – undemocratically and opaquely. Very early on the Heinrich Böll Foundation identified the lack of democracy here and began searching for forms in which civil society and parliaments could participate. This required improved networking among the different offices of the foundation – from Washington to Beijing, from Brazil to South Africa, and from Turkey to Berlin. This is uncharted territory and it has not always been easy to find partners in the project countries who are interested, beyond the problems at home, in the challenges that these new clubs and power centers pose in social, ecological, and democratic terms.

Women on the rise throughout the world

The women of the world had to get to know each other before they could identify common concerns. At the first UN World Conference on Women in Mexico City in 1975, upper-class women clashed with activists from protest movements. At the second confer-

ence in Copenhagen in 1980, Western feminists were sharply criticized by radical women from the Global South. Only at the third conference in 1985 in Nairobi did it gradually become clear that feminist engagement belonged together with altering the structures of power and dominance. This gave rise to the Beijing Platform for Action at the fourth World Conference on Women in 1995, the most detailed and even today groundbreaking conception of equality in all areas of life as well as of a more humane politics in general.

It was also during this time that the Heinrich Böll Foundation was founded – the first German political foundation to have gender democracy written into its statutes as a cross-sectional and shared responsibility. The concerns of the Beijing platform were adopted by the foundation, which has used the entire scope of its knowledge and arsenal to promote and support gender democracy, both in international politics and within the foundation itself.

A central forum for debate on this issue is the annual session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women, in New York, which monitors if and how the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination (CEDAW) from 1979 is being implemented in everyday life. Treaty states are required to appear there on a regular basis for country reviews. The evaluation by the commission also includes voices from NGOs.

In the past, various foreign offices of the Heinrich Böll Foundation have used the CEDAW as a political lever, working with partner organizations to compose shadow reports to supplement official depictions of progress. In this way, governments are reminded of their promises, and their noncompliance is made public. The Heinrich Böll Foundation has also ensured that representatives of civil society are present in New York and that whitewashing by officials is exposed. The Washington office provides assistance in this based on its experience and through organizational support and its own events. The annual meetings at the margins of the UN Commission on the Status of Women, which more than 4,000 women attend in New York in March on a regular basis, have developed into the most important forum for exchanging information and international networking on women's issues.

In many countries more women now actively participate in politics. There has been much disillusionment, however, regarding violence against women, a central concern of international accords. Here action by national politicians is needed: while a convention such as the CEDAW does provide a frame of reference, it unfortunately has little practical impact.

In the meantime international women's politics overall is facing a stiff headwind: an "unholy" alliance of Islamic and Christian influenced governments, from the Vatican, the United States, and several African countries, is fighting against the established agreements on sexual and reproductive

rights, opposes comprehensive sexual education, and would like to speak only of (heterosexual) women and men or traditional families and prohibit other forms of sexual orientation and gender identity. Civil society organizations that propagate this agenda should not even be allowed at the negotiating table. The foundation and its partners seek to oppose such reactionary efforts, reminding people and governments about international agreements, forging alliances, and supporting alternative discourses.

This headwind can be seen in discussions at the UN. The political declaration on the twentieth anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action is not exactly a document of democratic awakening: It was composed without the participation of civil society and was adopted on the first day of the meeting. "It is again merely declarations of intention without concrete steps about how to deal with the profound inaction and evident reluctance of states to implement women's rights," says Gitti Hentschel, former director of the Gunda Werner Institute (GWI), with disappointment.

Something has changed in civil society as well. One consequence of the professionalization of NGOs is that some of them send dispassionate functionaries rather than activists to New York. While they know what to do, they lack the passionate verve that could still be felt at Beijing. And when only concrete individual concerns remain, the collective movement often falls by the wayside.

Thus even today "Beijing" remains the high point of the feminist awakening. In the web dossier "Beijing + 20: Women's Rights Worldwide – Time for Implementation Once and For All," the GWI has addressed what must be done for a new impetus. Real progress has been made only on the issue of women and security. In 2000, the Security Council of the ▶

Sexual and reproductive rights

An essay by Christa Wichterich

Women's bodies have repeatedly been the target of conservative and fundamentalist ideologies and practices. The individual right to self-determination is also influenced by social and cultural norms, legal parameters, and – more than ever – determined by reproductive technologies and medical possibilities. This essay by sociologist Christa Wichterich provides background information and analytic approaches from an international perspective. ↗

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Available at: www.boell.de

- ▶ United Nations discussed this issue for the first time and unanimously passed Resolution 1325, which is regarded as a groundbreaking step in peace and security policies in terms of women and gender equity. The goals of the resolution are the prevention of armed conflicts, participation of women in peace and security policies, and protection from sexualized violence in war. Since that time, six additional resolutions on individual issues have been passed. The Heinrich Böll Foundation has been actively involved in this process on various levels: by playing a central role in the (German) Women's Security Council founded in 2003, by consistently providing information and engaging in networking, by intervening with governments, ministries, and armed forces, by organizing events, by reporting regularly on the GWI website, and by having individual regional and national foundation offices cooperate with groups that pursue national action plans regarding Resolution 1325. ↗

After fifteen years, the results have been modest. While good progress has been made on paper, in practice equal participation for women on measures concerning the creation and keeping of peace are a long way off. Less than ten percent of negotiators at peace talks are women. One still needs a magnifying glass to find women among UN peacekeeping troops and matters are only marginally better with respect to the police. Although the UN proclaims a zero tolerance policy regarding violence against women, both troop members and civilians have engaged repeatedly in sexualized violence. In 2015 numerous incidents and investigation reports showed that violence in the name of peace is still frequently silenced and downplayed, and is rarely prosecuted.

For a climate of justice

There is hardly an issue that requires international cooperation more urgently than climate change. In 1992, the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change was signed at the Earth Summit, the UN Conference on the Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro. Five years later, governments passed the Kyoto Protocol with obligatory reductions in greenhouse gases. Even today, however, the battle against climate change has made little progress; too great are the conflicts of interest within and between countries.

The Heinrich Böll Foundation has followed UN climate negotiations for many years – critically and constructively. The foundation has gathered and disseminated knowledge in partner countries about how climate negotiations actually function. It has also raised issues that have been left off official agendas (justice, compensation by polluting companies,

etc.). The annual Conference of Parties (COPs) has been used to build up networks. Over the years, an intra-foundational network of staff members has been established throughout the world, meeting on a regular basis to discuss questions of strategy and politics as well as practical cooperation. The foundation works quite consciously as a bridge-builder between the different “camps” of civil society. This includes enabling project partners to attend civil society discussions on the margins of the COPs and thereby to dismantle to some extent the dominance of northern NGOs in these processes.

From the beginning, the Heinrich Böll Foundation has emphasized that climate change also raises issues of justice: that there must be a fair deal between the highly industrialized North that produces the lion's share of emissions, the emerging countries that are catching up, especially in terms harmful emissions, and the developing countries that suffer from the consequences but have been unable to derive any benefits. The poor countries must be helped in coping with climate change, in adapting to it, and in mitigating its consequences.

That is not possible without money, more money, as is repeatedly emphasized at the debates. There is already funding for it: the UN climate fund that came out of international climate negotiations in 2009. It was agreed at the time that by 2020, 100 billion US dollars would be available annually for climate projects in developing countries, a large portion of which would be distributed through the newly established Green Climate Fund (GCF). Small yet agile, the Heinrich Böll Foundation has been able to get a lot done in the large and cumbersome United Nations.

Fighting climate change in gender-sensitive ways and with the participation of everyone

The Washington office of the Heinrich Böll Foundation has monitored the establishment of the Green Climate Fund (GCF) since 2011. Liane Schalatek, associate director of the Washington office, was present at the planning discussions and the regular meetings of the governing board. Her detailed reports, which are sent to a large group of recipients, are something akin to a chronicle of how the organization was established.

These reports contain far more detail, analysis, and background information than the official protocols, and they can be read much earlier, as the official reports of the secretariat appear only months after the meetings. Thus the “Böll report” has become an important point of reference for very different people: for government representatives whose countries are not represented on the governing board, for representatives of international organizations, for the

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<http://il.boell.org/en/promoting-israeli-action-plan-implementation-united-nations-security-council-resolution>



Global Climate March, Berlin, November 2015 Photo: Jörg Farys, die projektoren

many interested members of civil society who cannot take part in the meeting and are unable to follow the rather technical proceedings, and for journalists who follow climate negotiations. Taken together the reports are also a lesson in how such funds are established and what becomes of the promises of the founding fathers and the (far too few) founding mothers.

Together with the renowned Overseas Development Institute (ODI), the foundation maintains the website www.climatefundsupdate.org, the first global address for information about the various climate funds. The website www.germanclimatefinance.de – run by the Heinrich Böll Foundation together with Oxfam, Brot für die Welt, and Germanwatch – examines and comments on international climate funding by the German government.

The foundation office in Washington also contributed to the inclusion of direct democratic participation in the configuration of the GCF. The procedural rules allow for only two “active observers” from civil society at meetings of the governing board, one person from an industrialized country and one from a developing country. It is therefore important to ensure that both of these observers are well prepared and can represent the concerns of those who do not usually have a seat at conference tables. This is precisely what the Heinrich Böll Foundation has done, helping prepare observers at each NGO meeting prior to the session and providing travel cost allocations to ensure the participation of members of those communities that need support from the fund, but would otherwise have no input.

With various interventions, the Washington office also seeks to raise interest in the role of women and the needs of women in climate protection. The reason for this is obvious and logical; because men and women are affected very differently by climate change and have very different possibilities for reducing emissions, financial instruments such as the

GCF must be adjusted to the respective needs of women and men in equal, but appropriate ways.

This persistent work has paid off; already in the conception phase of the GCF, there was a mandate for gender-sensitive procedures. GCF was the first international climate organization to be launched this way. In 2014 the governing board issued a Gender Policy and Action Plan for the GCF. Even more groundbreaking, this resolution states that gender aspects should be consistently considered in policies and guidelines. The details and the sum total of this course of action will determine whether the funding decisions of the GCF will adequately combat climate change and sufficiently facilitate adaptation to it.

Not welcome in the club

The Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro and the World Conference on Women in Beijing were highpoints in a heyday of conference diplomacy and intergovernmental institutionalization, later referred to as “global governance.” In the new millennium, however, the UN has declined in significance. Today nations with shared interests come together in “clubs” such as the G20, pursue particular concerns with other like-minded countries, or act as “coalitions of the willing.” This undermines international democracy as well as the development and legitimation of global standards.

The informal alliance of the Group of 20 (G20) – the twenty most important industrial and emerging countries – arose out of the financial and economic crisis of 2008. The group is comprised of nineteen nations and the European Union. The G20 governments claim a global leadership role; they like to point out that they represent almost two-thirds of the world’s population, produce 84 percent of the global gross domestic product, and conduct 80 percent of world trade.

However, the G20 “club,” which has made itself into the most important coordinating and deci-

sion-making body in the world, lacks legitimacy: one hundred seventy-four nations are largely excluded from decisions concerning the community of states as a whole. From the very beginning there were other “planets” that rotated around the “sun” of the G20, such as organized business interests (B20) and labor representatives (L20), but consultations with civil society were not initially planned and were only established later (C20). There are still no regular deliberations with the C20 groups, however, as several governments reject the right of civil society to participate.

Conversely, civil society in the North and South has shown little interest in this new configuration, which does not really fit into the old models of political conflict. A farewell to the hegemony of the West, yes please; but with this orientation and exclusivity, no thanks. The Heinrich Böll Foundation recognized early on that observing and participating were important here as well. Already in 2010, the foundation started to bring together something like “coalitions of the vigilant.”

Various offices of the foundation and the Berlin headquarters work hand in hand in this regard. Since August 2010, the quarterly e-newsletter “G20 and BRICS Update” (<http://us.boell.org/product-series/g20-and-brics-update>) has provided information about important developments; in 2015, the newsletter was replaced by online articles. A broad coalition of partners from the BRICS countries has also begun publishing its own newsletter, which critically follows the BRICS club and the New Development Bank. ↗ A website of the Heinrich Böll Foundation (<http://us.boell.org/categories/finance-development-g20>) makes accessible to interested readers basic information and a wealth of G20 documents that would otherwise require great effort to compile, as well as important background information in the form of studies and critical commentaries. Through expertise and engagement, the Heinrich Böll Foundation has succeeded in creating a network of interested people and organizations and continues to supply them with basic knowledge and analytic assessments of the G20 process. In addition the foundation works to organize and support the participation of civil society.

Five of the G20 states – Brazil, Russia, India, China, and (since 2010) South Africa – have also formed “a club within a club,” the BRICS nations. The Heinrich Böll Foundation, with offices in all five countries, has followed this development very closely, since the five BRICS nations have big plans. Vexed by the failure to reform voting rights at the World Bank, they founded the New Development Bank (NDB) and their own currency reserve fund, which is supposed

to provide quick and inexpensive loans – in particular, without onerous conditions – and ensure that each member country remains fluid during crises. These new institutions and the Asiatic Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) have alarmed the World Bank, which in response established its own Global Infrastructure Facility (GIF). The Heinrich Böll Foundation office in Washington, which has a lot of experience dealing with major projects of the World Bank, fears that hard-won environmental and social safeguards will now be watered down. Especially for major infrastructure projects, the risks are great and requirements in the interest of residents and the environment are particularly important.

The G20 have agreed to a Global Infrastructure Initiative to facilitate investments. Many of these major projects are to be realized in public-private partnerships (PPP). Civil society groups have been very critical of this because the PPP model has by no means proved superior to public investments. In addition, PPPs always carry the risk that profits will be privatized and losses socialized. This critique, however, is also directed in principle at the new mantra of megaprojects. “Some of us are old enough to remember how recklessly the petrodollars of the 1970s and 80s were spent,” comments Nancy Alexander, program director of the Washington office. “Then, reckless leaders tried to turn a quick profit without regard to the social, environmental, and financial consequences, including unpayable debts. Seeing the devastation wrought by poorly conceived infrastructure, many of us worked to create systems of transparency, safeguards, and recourse at the multilateral development banks – systems that are now considered too time-consuming, expensive, and violations of national sovereignty.” ■■■

↗ [Link to study](#)

www.vasudha-foundation.org/wp-content/uploads/FINAL-BRICS-NEWSLETTER-FIRST-ISSUE-SEPTEMBER-2015.pdf

4

Politics for Democracy

Democratic realpolitik: Dealing with authoritarian regimes

An essay by Ralf Fücks

In a now famous essay published more than twenty-five years ago, Francis Fukuyama proclaimed the “end of history.” His central thesis was that rivalry between political systems was over. After the collapse of the socialist bloc, there was no longer any alternative to liberal capitalism. The future developments of the international community, Fukuyama contended, would occur on the terrain of market economies and democracies. The “end of history” meant the end of systemic ideological competition. In the early 1990s this illusion may still have been credible. In the meantime, however, history has returned with a vengeance. Liberal democracies are currently being challenged on two fronts: by new, brashly self-confident authoritarian regimes and by Islamic fundamentalism, a religiously backed ideology that openly declares: Your values are not our values and your modernity is our enemy.

What is a liberal democracy? This is a fascinating subject of endless debate. Ultimately, we know fairly well what marks the difference between liberal democracies and authoritarianism: fair and free elections, political pluralism, rule of law, separation of powers, independent media, and a free and vibrant civil society. It is a combination of institutional order and a free and open political culture that distinguishes our liberal democracies.

A new form of authoritarianism

The “Arab Spring” initially appeared to many of us as a new incarnation of the democratic wave that had swept through Europe in 1989–1990: A grand new era of dignity and self-determination. In the meantime, however, we have been confronted with the ruins of this hope almost everywhere. For President Putin, reinstalling a system of absolute power in Russia is not enough. His intervention in Ukraine is also a preventive counter-revolution against the spread of the “democracy-virus” to Russia itself. East of the European Union, a belt of more or less authoritarian states has formed: Russia, Belarus, the Central Asian Republics, Azerbaijan, and Armenia. They do not consider themselves in transition between authoritarianism and democracy. On the contrary, they see themselves as a counter-model to democracy. The Kremlin in particular is not satisfied with securing its own regime’s survival through the installation of an orchestrated pseudo-democracy. Instead, it consistently supports antiliberal forces throughout Europe, ranging from the French National Front to fascist groups in Greece and Bulgaria.

But the most important adversary of liberal democracy remains China, whose ruling elite openly champions its model of authoritarian modernization. Any flirting with free enterprise, the market economy, and proactive citizens’ engagement ceases the moment it threatens the Communist Party’s ruling monopoly. Whoever questions the political power or financial perks of the ruling elites can expect to face brutal repression. Any critique of the system is brushed off with a reference to the indisputable economic and social success of the “Chinese way”; any demands for democratization are dismissed as jeopardizing the country’s stability. Either us or chaos: this formula is utilized by the ruling elites in Beijing, Moscow, and Cairo alike. And, like it or not, it resonates with large segments of their societies.

Most antidemocratic regimes do not rely merely on fear and repression to govern. They also secure the loyalty of a more or less substantial part of their population through increasing wealth, upward social mobility, functioning services, public or-

der, and patriotism – all sources of legitimacy compensating for a lack of civil liberties. As long as standards of living continue to rise and public life functions relatively well, many people are willing to accept certain limits to their personal freedom and political rights. This bargain can be described as an “authoritarian social contract” between the ruling elites and the population: You guarantee increased wealth and stability, and we come to terms with your rule.

Authoritarian regimes are not simply transient phenomena on the path to democracy. They constitute a form of government in and of itself, and they are unapologetic about it. This also means that we cannot pretend they will disappear tomorrow. At the same time – and this is part and parcel of any sober assessment – the appeal and allure of our democracies has suffered, even within our own societies. Decreasing voter turnout and the rise of populist movements in Europe and the United States are significant indications of this trend.

Democracies in crisis

There are many reasons for the increasing lack of confidence in our democracies: For one thing, the policy of military regime change deployed by the United States has failed dramatically. In Iraq and Afghanistan, American neoconservatives – in addition to some liberal hawks among American Democrats – did not merely plan to exchange anti-American with pro-Western regimes. They counted on a scenario in which military intervention against the reign of terror employed by the Taliban and Saddam Hussein would pave the way for democratic modernization. In the case of Afghanistan, many German Greens had shared these expectations. Their approval of the deployment of the German armed forces in Afghanistan was contingent on the hope of establishing a democratic country. Today we have reached a much more sober assessment of the possibility of installing democracy from the outside. The US-led intervention in Iraq proved to be a foreign policy blunder with dramatic im-

plications. Those who breach international law in the absence of absolute necessity cannot convincingly call upon others to comply with it. The detention facility in Guantánamo Bay and the excessive surveillance practices of the National Security Agency (NSA) symbolize the crisis of America's credibility as the champion of democracy.

At the same time, those voices questioning the universality of liberal democracies have grown louder. Claiming that Chinese, Russian, and Iranian societies are simply not compatible with democracy has become a legitimate piece of policy advice for Western decision-makers.

The dramatic social consequences of the 2008–2009 financial crisis – many of which still affect our societies today – further damaged the West's credibility in the world. Policy makers and journalists in Asia and Latin America have not forgotten where this crisis was incubated. For many of them, the crisis serves as yet another example of the irresponsibility of Western democracies vis-à-vis the broader international community.

In addition, the weak economic performance of many Western democracies, particularly in Europe and Japan, stands in stark contrast to the spirit of optimism present in many other parts of the world. Economic growth still counts when comparing competing systems – in particular in countries where most people still live in poverty and hope for upward social mobility. This is why authoritarian regimes quickly descend into crisis mode when economic growth stagnates and the state fails to meet the socioeconomic expectations of its population.

In Europe, citizens fear that the ability of our democracies to shape reality is increasingly impeded by a globalized economy that has taken on a life of its own. The growing internal forces tearing at the cohesion of the EU reflect its inability to successfully tackle the financial crisis or to design a refugee policy based on solidarity, and they paralyze Europe's ability to act internally as well as externally. That, too, has a negative effect on our self-confidence and image in the world.

How can and should we stand up for our values of democracy and freedom in the world? And which instruments do we have at our disposal to do so?

Spaces for civil society in authoritarian or semi-authoritarian states are shrinking at an alarming rate across the globe – political foundations can point to numerous examples of this. In many countries, our partners are faced with increasing pressure. They are accused of being unpatriotic; their legal room to maneuver and their financial resources are strained. Support for democratic civil society from international donors is increasingly brushed off as unwelcome meddling in internal affairs. Authoritarian rulers are quick to learn from each other how best to control NGOs and restrict remaining spaces for civil society.

At the same time there are justified doubts as to whether the formula of “change through rapprochement” really works: at least in Russia and China, increasing economic integration and political cooperation have failed to have a positive effect on domestic governance. Sometimes it seems as if a growing level of exchange between nations even strengthens such regimes from within.

Democratic realpolitik

This brings me to the next controversy: Should democracy assistance be a central objective of our foreign policy at all? Or should we revert to a foreign policy that is uninterested in the internal governance of states as long as our national interest is served, as the hyperrealist school of thought would recommend?

I would like to respond that democracy assistance is not an idealistic or naive endeavor. It is in our own interest to broaden the circle of democracies. This is especially true with regard to long-term global peace and stability. The foreign policy choices of governments are strongly influenced by the nature of their political systems. Domestic politics are therefore of the utmost importance for the predictability and stability of international politics.

There is some truth to the statement that democracies don't go to war against each other. In contrast, authoritarian states lack substantial checks and balances to prevent the militarization of their foreign policy. While military expenditure, saber rattling, and foreign interventions normally stir public protests in democratic societies, authoritarian states lack this internal barrier. In most dictatorships and semi-authoritarian states, decisions are made in small circles behind closed doors, and state-run propaganda is employed to heavily distort public opinion. Those who protest are silenced or even fear for their lives – as evidenced by the violent death of Anna Politkovskaya and other dissenting journalists in Russia. In Turkey, critical journalists have repeatedly been arrested. In China, bloggers who oppose the government live in constant fear of imprisonment.

In addition, authoritarian states tend to compensate for domestic crises with hyper-nationalistic adventures abroad. Whenever they fail to legitimize their regimes through economic success or social amenities, temptations are high to engage in armed interventions abroad to prevent a rift between the ruling class and the people.

When dealing with authoritarian regimes, the need to compromise is unavoidable. Strict noncooperation is not an option, if only because of the many shared problems and interests involved: Climate change, international trade, a stable financial system, the refugee crisis, the nonproliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), and fighting international terrorism – on all of these issues we have to find common ground with authoritarian regimes. In foreign policy, political and economic sanctions are weapons of last resort, to be used against massive violations of international law. We therefore need to find a way to enable cooperation while refusing to simply accept arbitrary rule and repression. This starts by calling a spade a spade, rather than glorifying authoritarian rulers as “flawless democrats.” We need to openly criticize rigged elections, arbitrary rule, and blatant human rights violations. The extent to which we offer support to critical intellectuals, independent media, and civil society in authoritarian states serves as an important yardstick.

This includes defending the work of international foundations and NGOs in those countries.

Liberal democracies, by the way, do not have to be imposed on anyone. When people have the choice, they very rarely choose authoritarian rulers who deploy violence and exploit the country's resources for personal gain. The wish to be decently governed is universal.

Universal values instead of cultural relativism

It is true that we are only credible abroad if we put our own house in order. But despite the crises and alarming developments we face in our own societies, the West should confidently stand up for its democratic values instead of paying homage to cultural relativism. Even if these values developed in the West, they are universal in nature. Around the globe, women and men invoke the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It is the last common utopia of humankind.

We should not accept the false dichotomy between cold realpolitik and naive idealism. The readiness to engage in dialogue and the search for constructive solutions are just as necessary as a clear normative orientation and a firm dedication to universal values in international policies. The great challenge lies in developing a democratic realpolitik that combines pragmatism with a strong commitment to principles.

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