

Funding political parties in emerging African democracies: What role for Norway?

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”There are two things that are important in politics. The first is money –and I can’t remember what the second one is”.

Mark Hanna, the political boss who masterminded William McKinley’s 1889 presidential bid.¹

Introduction

This report addresses the problem of foreign funding of political parties in newly democratised African states. Norway has been reluctant to support the political parties directly as part of its democracy assistance strategy², but as indicated by the former Minister of International Development, Anne Kristin Sydnes, in her statement to the Storting, 24 April 2001, this is about to change:

“I also wish to draw the political parties in the Storting into development co-operation. The parties provide a sound grass-roots basis for development policy, and they possess expertise in democracy-building. The parties that are represented in the Storting can make a greater contribution to the development of properly functioning, pluralistic party systems and democratic conditions in developing countries. By co-operating on long-term, democratic organisational development through knowledge transfers, advice and international exchanges, we will improve the opportunities for reducing poverty.”

First, we identify some problems associated with the development of political parties in Africa and indicate how funding may contribute to resolving these problems. Second, we explain what is meant by the concept of political funding. Third, we present some models of foreign party funding that may act as models for the future Norwegian support programme. Fourth, we review the status of Norwegian parties’ involvement in party supporting activities in new democracies. Five, we discuss the pros- and cons- of foreign party funding. Lastly, if Norwegian funding for parties is introduced, we address some problems one should avoid and indicate an organisational model that may limit some of the inherently problematic aspects of foreign funding while at the same time make a meaningful contribution to building democratic and sustainable multi-party systems.

¹ Here cited from The Economist, Oct. 23, 1999.

² Apart from the secretive support for the ANC in South Africa up to 1994 and the recent donations to the Serbian opposition parties.

1. Political parties and democratisation

International support for democratisation processes is estimated to total US\$ 2 billion annually (Burnell 2000). Assistance to democratisation has been directed at:

- government institutions; such as parliaments, electoral and human rights commissions, and local government reform, and
- civil society organisations, political parties and independent media organisations, and
- election processes.

Most donors, including Norway, have put an emphasis on the civil society organisations, which often were the leading forces behind the transitions from one-party or military rule to some form of multiparty democracy. But as argued by Carothers (2002: 19):

“In dominant-power systems, democracy promoters should devote significant attention to the challenge of helping to encourage the growth of alternative centres of power. Merely helping finance the proliferation of non-governmental organisations is an inadequate approach to this challenge. Again, political party development must be a top agenda item. Especially through measures aimed at changing the way political parties are financed. It should include efforts to examine how the over-concentration of economic power...can be reduced as well as measures that call attention to and work against the blurring of the line between the ruling party and the state”.

As new democracies move from a transitional phase to a consolidation phase, there is a need to build institutions that can support not only pro-poor policies but can check for executive dominance and abuse of state authority. It is for this reason there is a need to build functioning parties and vibrant party systems. Parties are the ‘engine room’ of democratic polities as they structure the competition between societal groups and interests. The main argument in favour of parties is that they provide a mechanism by which citizens can hold the political leadership accountable.

As outlined in the main part of the report³, the parties in African states are characterised by:

- a dominant party system,
- a fragmented party system, and
- weak parties.

A dominant party system is one in which one party tends to win an excessive number of seats in the legislature and/or retain governing power continuously. In the two longest surviving African multi-party systems, Botswana and

³ Rakner L. & Svåsand L. 2002 “Multiparty elections in Africa’s new democracies” CMI Report R 2002: 7.

Zimbabwe, one party has controlled a majority of parliamentary seats and held the presidency since independence was achieved. Also in newer democracies, there is a tendency for the winning party to be returned with overwhelming majorities, such as the ANC in South Africa and SWAPO in Namibia. Democratisation has in several states meant that the former single-party regime has been able to continue in office, such as in Kenya and in Tanzania. Part of the opposition's problem is the allegation that the state-carrying party makes use of governmental resources for party purposes. As most opposition parties are cut off from access to public funds, they are disadvantaged in the electoral process. We also see that opposition parties are not to the same degree as the incumbents able to get donations from businessmen. Incumbency in many African countries also means that the governing party is able to profit from kickbacks on government contracts and sale of state assets. State control of important media, like radio, television and newspapers, creates an unbalanced playing field during election time and reduces the opposition's ability to function as a corrective and an alternative to the government. Increasing the resources for the opposition parties would therefore create a more level playing field.

In addition to the opposition parties being smaller electorally than the governing party, the opposition is also fragmented. For example, the Zambian party system now consists of more than 30 parties, and although several of these probably exist on paper alone, a substantial number of them run candidates in this year's presidential, parliamentary and local council elections. A fragmented party system reinforces the power of the dominant party. Combined with the first past the post electoral system, as we find in former British colonies, the opposition does not offer a challenge to the incumbent party in parliament. While increasing the capacity of the opposition would in principle improve the democratic quality of such states, a disadvantage could be a perpetuation of the fragmented party system.

African parties are generally weak in several meanings of the term. Firstly, they tend to be fluid organisations with little capacity to exist over time. This inhibits the electorate's ability to evaluate a party's performance over time and offers few cues to the voters as to what they can expect of a party in the future. Secondly, most parties have trouble establishing a durable network of organisations across the territory. Thus, only a part of the electorate may actually have a range of parliamentary candidates to choose among. Increased resources for parties would presumably enable them to establish a broader territorial presence. Thirdly, African parties are weak in terms of developing a comprehensive political vision. Instead, they tend to be heavily dependent on individual personalities.

While the development of several parties that are able to sustain themselves over time is a necessary ingredient in democratic consolidation, there is a limit to how many parties a political system can accommodate and still provide a government that is able to survive for one or more electoral terms. Thus, it is a difficult balancing act in democracy assistance to enhance the conditions for a multi-party system without contributing to executive paralysis.

2. The concept of political finance

While funding of political parties is intrinsically understood to be crucial, it nevertheless is an ambiguous concept. With political funding we mean: the way that political parties and individual candidates running for political office raise funds for election campaigns *and*, in the case of political parties, for maintaining themselves as organisations.

Political finance is a complex political phenomenon to understand. The topic itself is not very transparent. Even in countries that in general have great openness with regard to information from official and private sources, information about political finance is incomplete, across parties and across time, and it is hard to specify the impact of finance on political outcomes, for instance for election results.

In spite of the problems in estimating the precise impact of political finance there is little doubt that the actors themselves, parties and candidates, believe it is important. The very fact that such information is not easily available proves that it is considered important. Moreover, in most countries there is an acknowledged need to have some kind of regulation of political finance. Total absence of regulation, it is feared, will lead parties and candidates to be controlled by important donors. We can distinguish between four sources of political finance that in general are considered legitimate, although all of these forms may not be permitted in all countries:

- a) resources mobilised by the political parties themselves, such as membership fees, taxes on representatives, income from property, publications and subsidiaries controlled by the party,
- b) contributions from individuals,
- c) contributions from collective actors; such as by unions and other organisations and corporations etc, and
- d) subsidies from the state or other tiers of government.

In addition, some countries differentiate between financial support from domestic sources and international sources, to which we return below.

Political finance refers generally to monetary contributions and normally excludes other forms of contributions, although these may have important financial implications. Examples of this kind of party support are free radio and TV time during election campaigns, support for the press or for organisations affiliated with parties.

Political parties are complex organisations consisting of multiple levels (local, regional and national) and multiple units (the central party organisation, ancillary organisations for youth, women etc, or the group of elected officials) at each level. With regard to public funding of parties it is necessary to specify what unit in the party it is that receives contributions. Public subsidies also vary from being targeted to specific activities, as in Germany, to not coming with any strings attached, as in Norway. The criteria that are used to allocate subsidies vary from a minimum share of the votes to a share of parliamentary

seats. Finally, countries differ with respect to the obligation parties have to the state and the public in terms of financial accountability and transparency. A summary of how these various elements are applied in African democracies is presented in table 1. In nine other countries there is legislation but no information of funding taking place.

Table 1. Public subsidies for parties in African democracies where funding has been provided, by year of introduction, recipient, allocation criteria and amount.

Country	Year of introduction	Recipient	Basic allocation criteria (Amount for each party/candidate)	Total amount available
Benin	Law (90-023)	Parliamentary candidates Presidential candidates	Reimbursement of campaign expenses for successful candidates. (Rule for proportional distributed funding not implemented) Candidates must win more than 10% in presidential election	Decided by president decree
Burkina Faso	1997	Parties election campaign Central party org.	50% distributed proportionally among the parties in the National Assembly, 50% to parties with candidates in at least 5 of the 45 provinces Unspecified support between elections	USD 380.000
Cameroon	1990	Political parties	To be decided by the President when necessary	
Chad	1993	Grant to new parties	USD 10.000 for each new party	
Egypt	N.A	Central party org.	All registered parties (USD 29.000 pr. Party)	
Equatorial Guinea	N.A	Presidential candidates Central party org.	All participants (USD 30.000 each) All parties (USD 8.900 each)	
Gabon	1990	Central party org.	All parties with a candidate in each constituency	USD 34.700
Morocco	N.A	Parties' election campaign	The parties receive 20% before the end of candidate registration, 30% is given to parties based on the number of candidates filed, 25% is given to parties based on the number of votes obtained by each party in every district, and finally 25% is distributed based on the number of seats won.	Total amount to be decided by Prime Minister (1997: USD 13.6 million)
Mozambique	1999	Central party org. Presidential candidates	1/3 distributed equally among presidential candidates, 1/3 proportionally to parties represented in Parliament, 1/3 to all-participating parties based on number of approved candidates.	USD 340.000 to the two largest parties
Namibia	1997	Central party org.	Funding confined to parliamentary parties	

Seychelles	1996	Central party org.	Parties that nominated candidates for the preceding election, based on percentage of the votes	USD 1.5 million
South Africa	1996	Central party org.	Funding limited to parties in national assembly or in a provincial legislature. A sum divided equally among parties + another sum based on proportional parliamentary representation	USD 9 million
Tanzania	1992 1995 1996-		Law not implemented USD 9.600 for each presidential candidate USD 1.900 pr. Constituency for campaign costs + USD1.900 for each constituency won towards administrative costs Support for parties between elections, proportional to parliamentary representation	USD 10 million for 1996-2000
Zimbabwe	1992 1997	Central party org. Central party org.	Must hold 15 seats in the national assembly to receive funds Funds given to parties receiving 5% in previous election	

In: Saffu and Øhman (2002) Funding Political Parties in Africa, International IDEA handbook on funding of parties and election campaigns, forthcoming 2002.

The table indicates that in several countries the rules for qualifying for public funding are ambiguous. In Morocco and in Cameroon, the prime minister and president, respectively, control whether or not there will be any subsidies at all. In Benin and in Tanzania the laws enacting subsidies were only partially, or not at all, implemented. Support for parties and candidates do not necessarily mean that they are available well in advance of the election campaign. Equatorial Guinea is a case in point where all candidates were given USD20.000, but distributed very late. Subsequently, four days before election an additional USD 10.000 was distributed. Next day the opposition candidates withdrew from the race ! (Ibid: 10)

It seems at times that public subsidies have been introduced with the full understanding that it would not lead to an institutionalised party system, as the case of Gabon illustrates. We cite from Saffu and Øhman's report:

“At the national conference held in March 1990, the delegates were invited to form political parties. More than 70 self-declared parties were formed. Each party was granted 20 million francs CDA (around US 34.700) and a four-wheel drive vehicle for the electoral campaign. Most of these parties disappeared after receiving the state funds and have not reappeared since” (ibid: 10).

Political financing is under-regulated in Africa and it is very difficult to map out how much public money and other forms of revenue African parties have at their disposal. In less than one in five countries there are laws that regulate the raising of revenue. Whether parties are allowed corporate or foreign donations,

the amounts they are able to receive, disclosure and auditing procedures, and finally sanctions for breaches are in reality not present. And where there is legislation, parties have been inclined to circumvent them. In countries that have provisions for public funding, there are inconsistent, or incomplete, regulations, like in South Africa, where there are provisions for public but not for foreign funding. Saffu and Øhman state in the forthcoming International IDEA Handbook on Political Funding, that the existence of public funding does not make a significant difference for oppositional parties. The problem is that during transitions, during constitution-making and in the passing of Electoral Laws the new leadership has used its position to entrench their dominant positions vis-à-vis the opposition.

3. Current models of foreign funding

In part, it is unclear what 'international, or foreign, funding implies. Contributions from individuals residing in a given country may be considered 'foreign' if the individuals in question do not hold citizenship in the country. On the other hand, money sent from abroad to a party may not necessarily be seen as 'foreign' if the donor is a citizen who lives abroad, temporarily or permanently. Foreign funding may also be evaluated in different ways depending on who the donor is: parties in other countries, individuals, national NGOs, international NGOs, corporations, trade unions, governments or IGOs.

The short story of foreign funding of political parties

In order to put the issue of foreign funding into perspective we will review the history of foreign funding based on scattered information given in the literature on Africa. A useful classification given by Southall and Wood (1998) divides the history of party funding in Africa into three phases.

First, Southall and Wood point to the early post-war nationalist phase. Here parties had three sources of income. Some mass based parties managed to extract fees from their membership. Elite parties, on the other hand, were involved in patron-client networks where money was provided based on services rendered to economic elites. However, the dominant form of funding was external intervention made by foreign agencies or governments giving funds to nationalist movements in a ploy set out to influence the outcome of de-colonisation.

The post-colonial phase saw an effective merging of the state and the party. Party membership subscription was replaced by utilisation of state resources as the primary income for parties. But as many post-independence countries retained the single member constituency system of the former colonisers, many campaigns were self-financing, relying on local bigmen. There was in fact a rise of one-party states headed by "impatient profiteers" skimming the milk off a political spoils system.

Important supporters of the pro-democracy movements in this period were the humanitarian and church based organisations. Based in Western democracies

they provided support for democratic processes by supporting liberation movements and civic organisations, but it is difficult today to give an estimate of the extent and the impact of the funding, since much was conducted in clandestine. Also international party federations, like the Socialist International, Liberal International, the Christian Democratic International and the International Democratic Union, provided support for “sister parties”. But this support seems to have been of limited value for the parties in new democracies both prior to and after 1989 (Gennip 2000).

The history of party finance in the pre-1989 era is also the tale of the superpowers' struggle for ideological hegemony. They were largely neutral towards Africa's decline into authoritarianism and devoted little effort to punishing countries that were giving up democratic politics. Military, financial and ideological assistance was given to client states and liberation and independence movements to extend their influence. In this global game the intelligence agencies were the principal players providing secret funding to either the incumbent regime or oppositional forces, depending on whether the aim was to destabilise or stabilise the political situation in a country, impose a “friendly” regime or hinder a political situation from radicalising. Funds were subsequently sent across borders to provide institutional support for party organisations, train cadre and to raise the regimes' legitimacy by holding democratic or semi-democratic election processes. The result was that many authoritarian regimes were supported in the name of democracy.

The third phase is marked by the return of multi-partyism in the beginning of the 1990s. A new branch of the aid industry was born to support and consolidate the gains made – democracy assistance. In the early 1990s the emphasis was put on helping countries stage transitional elections and parties were given support in the electoral processes. Much less effort was directed at developing party organisations and platforms – the basis for long-term democratic sustainability. Instead, most effort was put into developing grass-root movements. Local NGOs and civic associations were drawing material provisions from and attracting funds from foreign donors (both government and unofficial).

While the pre-1989 development strategy was focused primarily on strengthening the government apparatus, the new strategy recognised the important role of civil society. As the new countries are popularly based democracies it is imperative to penetrate civil society to gain control over popular mobilisation. Aid in this new regime is therefore targeted at a host of different civil society organisations ranging from women and human rights associations, trade unions, business associations, media and so on. Hearn's argument is that developing countries are under “attack” from the Western world, which is exporting a minimalist definition of democracy that is not socially progressive, but rather conservative, serving only the interests of western governments and the international monetary institutions.

One might argue that the picture presented by Hearn is too static and that it only applies to a few countries. The aim could be to spread good governance and to reduce poverty without any ulterior motives. But all in all it is

important to note that the history of foreign intervention in developing countries is not a glorious one, and that the grim picture presented above is how many Africans perceive Western democracy assistance. External support for parties and candidates can backfire in the electoral process and allegations about foreign funding are being used to portray opposition parties as tools of foreign governments.

Funding modalities

The post-1989 wave of democratisation created new challenges to the donor community. In the following section we will review five national strategies used to support democratic development and particularly political parties.

The German model

Germany, through its political foundations, has the longest experiences in political assistance to developing countries. The different Stiftungen are closely affiliated with respective parties in the German Bundestag, and the most important ones are the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES –SPD),⁴ Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS –CDU), Friedrich-Naumann-Stiftung (FNS – FDP), Hanns-Seidel-Stiftung (HSS-CSU) and the Heinrich-Boll-Stiftung (HBS – Die Grünen). Their initial task was to provide civic education to the German population. The FES decided in the late fifties to expand its activities to working outside Germany, and others were soon to follow. The Stiftungen receive almost all of their funds for their international activities from the government, but have full autonomy in the use of the funds. The different foundations receive a total of DM 350 million (4% of the total foreign aid budget) annually (Mair 2000). The funds are shared among the parties roughly on the basis of the size of the parliamentary party groups. At present the Stiftungen have spread their international activities and have a field presence in more than 100 countries.

Contrary to other donors, the Stiftungen focus on long-term partnerships with particular organisations and political parties. But more short term funding of new political initiatives is also provided. The different Stiftungen are committed to the partisan support of specific sections of the political and social realm, with a special focus on interest and focus groups, as well as the media. With the different Stiftungen offering partisan support to different sectors of the political realm the idea is that this will make sure that all sections of society gets voice and the accusations of being partisan and interventionist will be reduced. Although the Stiftungen have been active in developing countries for over thirty years, their involvement in the first part of this period has been criticised for co-operation with authoritarian and single party regimes. In the past, co-operation with specific political parties was extensive (KANU, FRELIMO and CCM), but many of the parties in power hindered democratic development. Hence the Stiftungen were forced to drop parties in their support programmes (with South Africa as an exception), and chose to focus on civic education programmes, interest and advocacy groups, media, the strengthening of party political think tanks, parliaments and electoral

⁴ See for example <http://www.fes.de/> and <http://www.fnst.de/reda/>

commissions. However, the present funding strategy is under constant review as the Stiftungs recognise the important role of parties in a democracy as a link between society and the state (Hauck 2000).

The American model

The US party political support programmes for new democracies are executed by the National Democratic Institute (NDI) and the International Republican Institute (IRI).⁵ The IRI has a staff of about 65 persons while the NDI is bigger, with a staff of approximately 230 persons. Both have since the mid-eighties instigated programmes funded primarily through the umbrella body responsible for the allocation of democratisation funds, the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), which has an annual budget of approximately US\$ 32 million. But also USAID is active in promoting party related activities, channelling about US\$ 10 million to the NDI and IRI. NDI is the most active on the African continent with reported activities in 15 countries. Compared to the German Stiftungs, the NDI and the IRI are much less autonomous in character, as programmes have to conform to guidelines set by the US government) (Hauck 2000). This has meant that the American institutes often have supported non-communist parties. In addition, cuts in the NED by USAID have almost transformed the IRI and the NDI into subcontractors to USAID, which defines the terms and references for their engagement abroad.

The NDI and the IRI execute projects on elections, civic education, parliamentary strengthening, and political party capacity building. The party support is directed towards the training of members of parliament and technical assistance for party building, including election monitoring and campaign assistance (mostly formulation of programmes). In each country several of the major parties receive support, rather than one particular sister party. Who gets chosen is decided in-house, based on an analysis of the policy orientations and strengths of the individual parties. This has again led to accusations by political leaders in development countries that the Americans are interventionist, partisan and oriented towards Western democracy.

The British model

In the UK the Westminster Foundation (WF) has since 1992 provided support for the building of pluralistic democratic institutions overseas.⁶ The main geographical areas are East and Central Europe, while the Anglophone countries are the main area of focus on the African continent. The Foundation is a “non-departmental public body” and is as such not affiliated with any particular political party, and the Foundation tries to have a neutral role in democratisation assistance. Its particular focus is on giving technical assistance to electoral processes, supporting the independent media, trade unions, political NGOs and parliaments and the strengthening of political parties.

⁵ See <http://www.ndi.org/> and <http://www.iri.org/>

⁶ See <http://www.wfd.org/>

The British government funds the WF with an annual grant of GBP 4 million (1999). Of this sum 50% is channelled abroad via the Foundation and 50% via British political parties. The resources handled by the Foundation serve to carry out cross-party projects with a range of parties in a country. In addition, funds are spent supporting non-party projects like media, civil society, trade unions and the electoral process. The remaining 50% are spent on support to individual political parties channelled through the UK political parties (Labour, Conservative and the Liberal Party). Support projects are primarily technical, and relate to party building, party organisation and electoral support on a party-to-party basis.

The Dutch model

The Dutch approach is somewhat different from the strategies described above. The Dutch Foundation for the new South Africa (NZA), was established as an instrument for stabilising the particular situation of the post-apartheid South Africa. The NZA was established and supported by all parties in the Dutch parliament, with the exception of the extreme right. Its funding is made 100% by the Dutch government and it is unique in that all parties in South Africa and later Mozambique (1997) receive support. The formula used in South Africa made 25% of the budget available to all parties on an equal basis and the remaining 75% was distributed according to the number of seats held by a party in the national assembly. Parties outside the assembly received no support after the 1994 elections as to avoid formation of new parties simply to access funds.

According to its statutes the NZA shall initiate activities aimed at supporting electoral campaigns, democracy education and capacity building for political parties. The support given to political parties should strengthen the party organisation, spread democratic values from cadres up to the leadership level, and strengthen party infrastructure. In April 2000 the Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (IMD) replaced the NZA. The new foundation has decided to explore the possibilities of expanding its activities to Latin America and Asia. The organisational structure of the IMD consists of an executive committee of representatives from the Dutch political parties, and each party appoints a program officer to work for IMD. The officers represent the IMD and not the parties they are appointed by and are to be responsible for co-ordinating activities with partners in the developing countries. The foundation also has a supervisory board, a secretariat and a representative in Mozambique.

The Swedish model

Since 1995 seven foundations closely aligned to Swedish political parties have been involved in channelling funds to “sister parties” in developing countries and in East and Central Europe.⁷ An estimate of 55 million SEK have been spent in a pilot project administered through the Swedish development agency

⁷ The Swedish organisations are small, often consisting of one person supported by a board. In almost half the cases, the person responsible is also the “international secretary” of the parties.

(Sida) with the aim of developing functioning pluralistic party systems in new democracies. Swedish parties represented in the Riksdag are given funds based on electoral strength and are given autonomy over which parties they want to support and in what ways. Although political parties are the premier beneficiaries (three-quarters) in the Swedish funding scheme, the last few years have seen growing support to youth and women's organisations plus independent organisations. The party-based support has primarily been spent on policy formulation activities, followed by organisational and campaign based activities. Seminars and conferences are the most common methods, followed by the sending of Swedish advisors.

A recent evaluation of the Swedish model concludes that the limited funds available for distribution by the Swedish parties give rise to organisational entities that are small and unevenly formalised.⁸ The administrative costs are high, with party entities based in Sweden receiving one-fourth of the funds. Despite administration being carried out by Sida the development agency has very little influence (by choice) over the running and the direction of the funding scheme, leading to several problematic aspects. For instance, over 65% of the funds was allocated to parties in East and Central Europe while only 35% are given to developing countries, although the intention was an opposite split. The evaluation report also makes the point that 45% of the support is given to parties with less than 10% voter support. On a positive note both the Swedish parties and the recipient parties approve of the informality of the party co-operation that has led to close personal contacts. In fact, the close personal contacts are held by the recipients to be just as important as the monetary support provided. This means that there is a positive process, were the Swedish parties share their know-how on issues like election campaigns and internal democracy with their younger counterparts. But in its assessment of the primary objective of the project, the development of a pluralistic party system, the evaluation report finds it difficult to claim it has been a success. Apart from the difficulty of assessing the impact of the various initiatives, they point out that support for individual parties in an uncoordinated manner may be far removed from an analysis of the needs of the party system and the democracy at large.

4. A comparison of the modalities of foreign funding

In this comparison we seek to analyse how the different funding models are organised and what consequences this implies. Then we take a closer look at what the different national strategies include in their support programmes. Lastly, we investigate how the different funding schemes have tried to limit the interventionist problem associated with foreign funding.

The Swedish and early German models have similarities in that party based external organisations channel support to so called "sister parties".⁹ In the US

⁸ Ugglå, F. et. al. "Rapport från utvärdering av stödet till de partianknutna organisationerna, Statsvetenskapliga institutionen, Uppsala universitet".

⁹ The German Ministry of Economic Co-operation now outright prohibits German foundations from giving any direct support to parties (South Africa is an exception).

the IRI and NDI perform the same function, but their support programmes in the different countries give funds to all relevant parties in these countries. The Westminster Foundation in the UK has two components – one is party to party based and the other is centrally administered by the WF itself, covering all parties in a country. The Dutch model, on the other hand, is administered through a single body (the IMD) and covers all parties in the recipient country. These findings can be summarised in the following matrix.

Figure 1: Classification of funding models

		Administrator	
		Party	Centralised unit
Recipient	Single party	Sweden, Germany, WF (party based)	Unofficial support
	All parties	US (NDI, IRI)	WF, NZA (IMD)

One common feature in the party administered arrangements of Sweden and Germany seems to be a low level of co-operation and co-ordination between the different national actors both abroad and domestically. Domestically this means that the lessons learnt by the parties are not shared, alas better practice does not develop. In the co-operating countries we see from evaluations that when a few parties in the party systems are singled out for support there seems to be little co-ordinated efforts. Rather this hap-hazardous way of operating prevents any gains in relation to the party systems and democracy as a whole. The Dutch arrangement seems to have been successful in this regard by limiting its efforts to fewer countries. Through the support of all parties above a certain threshold the party system as a whole gets a co-ordinated boost.

One important factor that distinguishes these different models from each other is their size. That is, the German, US and to some extent the British models are of a magnitude that can sustain permanent presence and engage in long-term projects in many countries. This gives an opportunity to attain detailed information of the ever interchanging political situation and gives the opportunity to limit funding based only on the needs of the recipients, but rather enables the donor to take the needs of the whole party system and indeed democracy at large into consideration. But again the Dutch with their limited resources have been able to overcome this problem with their selection of fewer countries. The funding strategy of the main actors that have institutionalised mechanisms to deal with foreign funding is summarised in the following model¹⁰.

¹⁰ This is a modified version of the model suggested by Gennip 2001.

Table 2: Forms of assistance by donors

Forms of assistance	Assistance to civil society (unions, media, human rights etc.)	Pro-democracy assistance (rule of law, constitutional support, cross cutting party training, civic education etc.)	Technical assistance to political parties (training, election campaigning, party management, support for think-tanks etc.)	Budgetary assistance to political parties (for funding of party core and for capacity-building activities)
Actors				
British WF and parties British parties	Yes, through WF (non party channel)	Yes, through WF	Yes, between British parties and likeminded parties in other countries	Limited, through British parties
American NDI and IRI	Yes	Yes	Yes	Limited, in exceptional cases
German political foundations	Yes	Yes	Limited, with the exception of South Africa	No
Netherlands NZA(IMD)	No	Yes	Yes	Limited
Swedish party entities	Limited	Limited	Yes	Yes

The five different models presented above show how different countries have chosen to structure their support to political parties and party systems. What seems clear is that most arrangements want to limit lump sum money transfers to the party purses. Rather, support is given to capacity building within the parties and “softer” forms of funding like democracy assistance and supporting civil society. Another aspect of the same quest for legitimacy of foreign funding is to limit the national funding agency’s (government) influence over the funding scheme. In all countries funding is given within the overall policy framework provided by government, but to avoid undue influence all countries under review, except the US, have arrived at different models to prevent the party finance from being state sponsored. In all donor countries the administrator has been put at an arm’s length from government, using foundations or institutes that have got a high degree of autonomy. Also, we see that the US Foreign Assistance Act prohibits the use of development assistance “directly or indirectly to influence the outcome of any elections in a country”. One factor that is not so obvious is that many support programmes are related to the parliamentary strength of the parties in the donor country, and not in the recipient country. This applies especially to the multiple body – low funding influence in figure 2 below.

Are donors imposing Western political life to Africa – and again being interventionist? Although some African leaders use the existence of foreign

funds to discredit the opposition, managers of the different funding schemes feel that they have been successful in avoiding being interventionist.¹¹ The history of foreign funding goes back more than 40 years, and in this period donors have gained considerable experience and have subsequently changed their modus operandi. Most donors have taken a cautious approach to funding parties directly or to engage with non-democracies in different forms.

Figure 2: Classification of funding influence

		Autonomy of party institutions	
		Low	High
Executing organisations	Single body	NZA (IMD), WF	n.a
	Multiple bodies	German Stiftungs, WF (Party based), SE (Political Parties)	US (NDI, IRI)

In addition to the funding provided by funding agencies, NGOs, business interests and development agencies there is also a myriad of party-to-party contacts across continents. It is only in the UK that the support pattern has been institutionalised into one common institutional arrangement - the Westminster Foundation. Elsewhere, like in France, political parties have contacts with their African counterparts, which supplies the fragile parties with much needed expertise on a one-to-one basis. Denmark on the other hand has not implemented international party subsidy schemes.

5. Norwegian parties' involvement in democratisation processes

The Norwegian political parties' present contacts with and support of political parties in new democracies is unevenly spread out among the parties and it is impossible to mention all contacts and projects, so we will limit the presentation to what the parties themselves have brought to our attention¹². The Labour Party (A) has an ongoing dialogue and good contacts with African sister parties, but its primary involvement is in East/Central Europe and the Balkans. Here the East and Central Europe Programme of the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) has supported projects on democracy and

¹¹ Summary of the Hague Conference on Network Democracy, November 25, 2001. Available on: http://www.nimd.org/2001/11_25_conference_summary_english.htm

¹² Based on questionnaires sent to all relevant parties in the Norwegian Storting.

institution building. On the African continent the parties have no concrete projects due to economic constraints but express great interest in extending their involvement.

The second largest party, the Conservative Party (H), is also actively involved in support to parties in East and Central Europe and the Balkans funded through programmes of the MFA. The party indicates that it has no funds of its own to get involved in projects outside Europe. Contacts towards other regions have only been sporadic, and based on the party's participation in the International Democratic Union. Domestically, the party has invited representatives from co-operating parties to participate in an "election seminar" every election year. This has had a bonding component where Norwegian party officials have participated in educational activities at national and regional levels abroad.

The Progress Party (FrP) is the Norwegian party that takes the most cautious approach to supporting foreign political parties and processes. There exist little personalised contacts and no institutional co-operation with parties in new democracies. The party harbours a great deal of scepticism to democracy aid and feels that support should be given conditionally on a proven record of better practices. Also the party feels that any formalised support to parties and democracies at large should be less based on the bureaucracy and more on the involvement of the political parties.

The Socialist Left Party (SV) does not have a formalised co-operation with African parties, but has ongoing projects with political parties in Central America and the Balkans. The Central American project with the title "Cooperation and Democracy Development" is funded through NORAD and is one of the few concrete projects concentrated at developing political party capacity in developing countries by a Norwegian political party. Execution of the project is twofold: firstly local level co-operation between local entities in Norway and in the co-operating parties; secondly, a party-core component on educating local councillors and party members. The project facilitates exchange of party members to national conferences and the distribution of funds directly to the co-operating parties. In the Balkans the Norwegian Socialist Left Party is involved in ongoing knowledge transfers and more specifically visits to co-operating parties in conjuncture with elections. The party has also arranged a seminar in Montenegro on building democracy for local councillors. This project has been funded by the Norwegian MFA and by the party's own funds. It is interesting to note that the party with an active project portfolio emphasises the need for clear auditing procedures in a future institutionalised Norwegian party based support programme.

The Center Party (SP) has long-standing bilateral contacts with different agriculturally based parties in Eastern/Central Europe and the Balkans. There has been exchange of party officials to national conferences, the party has helped develop party platforms for sister parties, and there has been co-operation between the youth and women's associations. Some parts of this co-operation have been supported by the Norwegian MFA. Contact with African parties is very limited and when it does happen it is indirectly through the

International Network of Centre Parties. The Centre Party, like many of the other parties, emphasises the positive contribution made by their women's and youth leagues in fundraising and solidarity work for poor countries. The party is very positive to expanding its involvement in a Norwegian institutionalised support programme for political parties in the South.

The Liberal Party (V), like the Labour Party and the Conservative Party, has better-developed links with East/Central Europe and the Balkans than with Africa. Projects have been supported by the MFA and have even incorporated participation by Bosnian politicians at the latest party congress and election campaign. Involvement outside Europe is limited to visiting sister parties and doing election observation in Malawi, together with the Labour party and the Christian People's Party (Krf). As in the case of the other parties' participation in the Internationals, in this case the Liberal international, has resulted in contacts, but no actual projects have materialised. And again, like in the case of the other parties, the party expresses great interest in expanding its international involvement, but lack of funds have been the inhibiting factor until now.

The picture that emerges from surveying the Norwegian political parties is that their present involvement is geared towards East/Central Europe and the Balkans. If a future support programme is to reach its goals of supporting the least developed parties in the most underdeveloped parts of the world much capacity building has to be done on the part of the Norwegian parties. A question that arises is whether Norwegian parties have the capacity to select and maintain suitable co-operating partners. This is a *problematique* we will return to in the next section. The degree of involvement is at present determined by the size (resources) and international foreign policy involvement of the parties. Resources and not lack of interest seems to be the factor that has limited the parties' involvement until now. An institutionalised arrangement for supporting political parties may go a long way in triggering the interest that is present among Norwegian political parties.

6. A framework for party funding

As pointed out by Peter Burnell in the book *Funding Democratisation*, "The definitive formula for optimising the funding of political competition eludes even the longest lived and most prestigious democracies" (Burnell and Ware 1998) as recent years' events in Germany, France and Italy illustrate. Nor is it easy to regulate political funding. No other country has as many, and as detailed, regulations of campaign finance as the United States; yet the loopholes and unintended effects require a constant adjustment of the regulations. There are many reasons for being hesitant of funding parties in Africa.

The pros and cons of foreign funding

The problematic nature of political finance in general and the particular problem associated with external party funding have lead to several arguments

for why this type of activity should be avoided. The most frequently used argument against foreign funding is, as noted before, that it is seen as attempts by actors external to a political system to influence the outcome of national processes, such as elections. This type of influence distorts a fundamental democratic principle: that the election of representatives should express the political preferences of the politically enfranchised citizens. The argument is often ended by posing the rhetorical question: how many Western governments would allow large sums of money to be given by foreign governments to one or a few of their own parties?¹³

Another argument is that the social basis for functioning parties and party systems is a well-organised and pluralistic civil society. If parties can rely on foreign funding, there will be no need for parties to connect to civil society. The argument is that money given directly to the party will create distance between the party and the electorate. The party will be less inclined to represent the views of the citizens, and oppositional parties will have fewer incentives to challenge the government, as the party already is in a comfortable position. Another argument along the same line is that money given directly to the party core will reduce internal democracy in the parties. When the party leadership has got sufficient funds it can buy many of the services it would otherwise need members for. As influence over the party's policies is the "payment" members seek for their efforts it is safe to assume that a wealthy party leadership will fast become a monolithic leadership.

Moreover, foreign funding has been accused of undermining democracy by creating self-sufficient parties monetary wise. 'Party entrepreneurs' will be encouraged to establish parties in order to tap into internationally available funds. The result will be a fragmentation of the party system – a development hardly conducive to democratic consolidation. Particularly in the early phase of democratisation there will be a number of parties that will not be able to survive. Early international assistance to multiple parties may artificially prolong the life of parties that have little basis in the electorate.

And finally, many students of African democratisation point out that African parties have little in common with their counterparts in Europe and North America. European parties have originated from religious, linguistic, regional and economic cleavages that were politicised during the democratisation processes in Europe. These types of parties are not necessarily replicated elsewhere – nor can it be an objective that they should be. Some *afropessimists* point to that some parties have secessionist objectives based on racial and tribal agendas, while other parties may not be particularly inclined to support democratic government. Thus, it may not be easy to establish criteria with which one can identify which parties should qualify for foreign assistance.

All these arguments have led many observers to conclude that as foreign funding is both unethical and counterproductive it should be an unwanted instrument in democracy assistance.

¹³ Note the controversy over the 'China connection' and former Vice-President Alan Gore.

On the other hand, there are also arguments in favour of foreign funding of political parties. The main reasons in favour of this policy are:

- a) political parties are integrated components of democratic governance; they cannot be avoided. Support for democratisation processes is incomplete if parties are totally neglected.
- b) since political parties exist, a viable party system requires a fair chance for non-governing parties to compete with incumbent parties, at least in the long run.

While ideally, political parties should develop out of national resources alone, the level of economic development in African states does not create a surplus sufficient to build mass parties from foundations in civil society. In addition to supporting the growth of civil society, organisations that are able to aggregate the interest already present in civil society should be encouraged to play the role of facilitator and mediator for the voice of the population into national politics. Democracy is not only about periodic elections but depends on the continuous deliberations of civil society. Political parties provide a direct channel into government that can transform the ideas that emerge into government action.

Today African parties are most often fluid organisations without any clear ideology, policies, membership or formalised procedures and they are most often based on one strong patron. In a liberal democracy citizens must have a fair chance to express their views. This is in very many African countries distorted by an undemocratic power structure, by a lack of knowledge about democratic procedures, and by difficulties in forming political organisations that can contest the incumbent government.

A public policy that includes funding of political parties must avoid:

- a) imposing a particular set of parties from abroad, or
- b) a particular organisational model, or
- c) excessive fragmentation of the party system.

The overall objective must be to stimulate the development of parties *for the purpose of enhancing democratic governance*. For this overall objective there is no particular party system or type of party that can fit all polities. Although the objective is NOT to make African parties similar to Norwegian ones, it is nevertheless an important argument in favour of party funding that major countries like the US, Germany and Britain are engaged in this type of activity. Just as is the case with the Netherlands, Norway represents a different kind of political system. Providing knowledge and information from political systems that are organised very differently from the big powers increases the range of possible models that can be adapted to fit national circumstances. Adaptation of models from abroad is not the same as imposition of models. No political system, anywhere, develops its political institutions in isolation from trends and models elsewhere. However, the opportunity to select appropriate models depends on available information and knowledge of how various democratic institutions and mechanisms function. That is why small countries should be involved in supporting political parties. One should also bear in mind the

reverse effect that funding of parties may have on Norwegian parties. If Norwegian parties become involved with counterparts in African countries, this will also lead to increased knowledge and understanding of developmental issues amongst the Norwegian participants. In turn, this will feed back into the formulation of Norwegian development policy.

Putting the framework into operation

The primary goal of a Norwegian funding scheme, as specified in the 2002 government budget¹⁴, is: [“to help develop functioning pluralistic political systems in developing countries”].¹⁵ The objective is to build democratic organisational capacity based on knowledge transfers, counselling and international exchange through long-term aid projects. It is specified that special attention should be given to projects that are cross cutting and supportive of women’s activities in the recipient countries. Direct financial subsidies to receiving parties should be avoided, and caution should be taken when countries come close to election times.

Four issues need to be addressed if support for parties is to be introduced:

a) How should countries be selected

We have emphasised the integrated nature of parties within the overall governing structure. Support for political parties must therefore fit with the general objectives of democracy assistance. This is most likely to be achieved if party support is directed to countries that already receive substantial aid for other democracy building purposes. By linking party support to the main receiving countries, it will be easier to maintain a long-term programme, as well as the need for co-ordination with other activities.

b) How should support be organised

The problematic nature of foreign funding requires a separation between the source of the funding and the receiving parties. The Dutch, British and American models all build on a joint national institution for this purpose. Presumably, this creates better national co-ordination than the Swedish model does. It also reduces the part of the budget that is spent by Swedish parties on internal administration. Thus, foreign funding should be introduced following the creation of a unit on the Norwegian side with representatives from political parties, similar to that of the Dutch IMD. This unit should not be limited to party representatives, but involve other actors with expertise in development issues and democracy building issues, such as research institutes.

The Dutch model holds many advantages. First of all it reduces the organisational overhead. Secondly, it reduces the potential for being interventionist, as money and trainers are sent to co-operating parties in the South in the name of a foundation. The Dutch have also tried to include all relevant parties in the recipient country into the support programme, with an emphasis on crosscutting support activities. In addition, the Dutch model is able to generate strong ownership among the participants on both sides, as the

¹⁴ Det Kongelige Utenriksdepartement, St.prp.nr.1 Kap. 160, Post 72.

¹⁵ Our translation.

IMD model is demand-driven. This means that political parties in the South are asked to submit proposals for capacity-building projects. Another feature of the Dutch model that is relevant for Norway is the selection of fewer countries. The Dutch, like the future Norwegian model, will have relatively modest funds available compared to the German, American and British models. So, if an institutionalised Norwegian support programme to political parties is to reach its overarching goal of developing functioning pluralistic political systems in developing countries, support needs to be focused on a few countries.

c) What kind of activities should be supported

As the need for assistance may vary considerably from one country to another and from party to party, it may be difficult to specify exactly what kind of activities that should be funded in every case. Below (Appendix 1), we suggest a series of possible activities that could be, but not necessarily have to be, part of the support schemes.

d) What parties should be supported

We have drawn attention to the potential conflict between support for individual parties versus support for the party system and the need to avoid contributing to party fragmentation. A possible model could be that support for parties is channelled through an inter-party unit in the recipient countries. The advantage of this model is that no particular party can be 'victimised' as being held hostage to foreign interests. Moreover, an inter-party unit could be a forum for discussion of issues that relate to parties in general, rather than to each one of them, such as electoral systems, electoral and campaign regulations. (Not all funds need to be allocated to such inter-party purposes). Parties eligible for participation in each country should be selected on a combination of criteria, rather than on single criteria. Among such criteria are: commitment to democratic government, including abstention from using violence or inciting to the use of violence. Parties that are able to nominate candidates in a minimum number of constituencies should be supported, rather than entrepreneurial one-man parties. Support could be channelled to parties that have been able to sustain themselves over some time, rather than to flash-pan parties. Parties that can demonstrate support from civil society or interest groups may be preferred over parties with no visible basis in society.

Concluding remarks

If democracy is to be entrenched in Africa it needs to be strengthened from within. Any support for foreign funding of political parties might therefore seem a bit tainted. But support is not about imposing models from outside, but rather about giving support to what are national processes. The purpose of strengthening parties is to improve the overall quality of the political system. Although there are good reasons to advocate party support as part of a general development policy, it is also worth noticing that this is a field where it may be difficult to identify immediate results. Party system development does not proceed in a linear way; long-term engagements are therefore necessary. Nor will all types of support be met with success. The development of parties is as much a result of factors in the parties' economic, social and

cultural environments as it is dependent on internal party factors. The objective is therefore not to make sure that every existing party in a given polity survives, but to reduce the arbitrariness with which parties now seem to be created as well as disappearing.

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Appendix 1

Relating to point c), on what activities that should be encouraged, we have found the political party support platform used by USAID relevant. In addition we have added some points [] to make the list exhaustive.

Organisational focus:

1. Political party planning: strategic planning, development of research skills for planning purposes.
2. Organisational development: party building, professionalisation, training in organisational management, [this will include exchange of key personnel for training purposes].
3. Local/regional party organisation: organisational linkages – national-local, co-ordination of organisational activities, programmes.
4. Resource development: allocation of budgetary resources within party organisation.
5. Message development: policy agenda formulating, party image building, party platform development.
6. Membership recruitment: membership development, membership management, volunteer recruitment, volunteer management.
7. Fund raising: the financing of party/candidate campaigns, campaign finance laws, [cross-cutting ethics programmes on “money in politics”].
8. Media relations: media training, developing messages for media coverage.

Electoral focus:

1. Communications strategies: communication skills, party outreach, intra-party communications.
2. Voter participation: voter identification, voter mobilisation, voter contracting, get-out-the-vote efforts.
3. Campaign strategy/planning: campaign management, administration.
4. Candidate recruitment: candidate selection, candidate training, leadership training.
5. Grass-roots outreach: grass-roots participation, grass-roots mobilisation, door to door canvassing.
6. Women and young people: programming targeted at mobilising and training women and young people in political party activism.

Governance/political process focus:

1. [cross party political education, with a view to foster a deeper understanding of the principles, institutions and processes that nurture and sustain multi-party democracy].
2. Legislative party building: party transitions in government, organising political opposition in government, organising political opposition in government.
3. Legal framework: electoral law reform, constitutional framework, ballot security/fraud.

4. Coalition building: inter-party relations in legislatures, [projects designed to promote confidence building and co-operation among the parties outside the legislative arena].
5. Party-poll observer training: election monitoring.

Summary

This report addresses the problem of foreign funding of political parties in newly democratised African states. The report identifies some problems associated with the development of political parties in Africa and indicate how funding may contribute to resolving these problems. Various models of foreign party funding that may act as models for the future Norwegian support programme are presented. Current involvement by Norwegian parties in party supporting activities in new democracies is assessed in the context of a more general discussion of foreign party funding. Lastly, if Norwegian funding for parties is introduced, we address some problems to be avoided and indicate an organisational model that may limit some of the inherently problematic aspects of foreign funding.

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