



**Dialogue on**  
**Globalization**

**BRIEFING PAPERS**  
**FES BERLIN**

## **New Approaches to Democracy Support**

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## 1 Introduction

After the end of the euphoria over democracy promotion in the Bush administration, American democracy support finds itself in a period of soul searching. This reorientation of a disgraced sub-category of US foreign policy is accompanied by a considerable journalistic uproar, in which analyses of the changed framework mix indistinguishably with the political objective of pointing the yet hesitant Obama administration into the "right direction".<sup>1</sup> Pessimistic appraisals of the global outlook for democracy emerge from these debates: after the ebb of the third wave of democratization, an authoritarian reverse wave is now rolling, supported by authoritarian powers like China, Russia, Venezuela, and Iran. This calls into question political premises of democracy support: consolidated democracies cannot exist everywhere, but only where specific pre-conditions—minimum security and functioning state rule, suitable economic development level, and rule of law—are already in place.

The changes in the global environment have also prompted an intense debate about strategies for democracy support in Europe. Above all, two global developments—if they can be corroborated empirically—have the potential to weaken Western democracy support: First, the failures paired with the transformation difficulties of many emerging democracies could strengthen the attractiveness of alternative authoritarian development models. Second, the shift in geopolitical power relationships of alternative providers of patronage such as China and Russia offers new possibilities for influence and threatens to devalue the incentives and sanctions of Western democracy support.

If the opportunity conditions deteriorate, democracy supporters will have to reposition themselves in order to operate successfully. It isn't enough to make the organizational position more efficient. To use dwindling resources more effectively, better strategies need to be developed, which on the one hand establish priorities and define guidelines, and on the other, are flexible enough to develop specific approaches and the right mix of instruments under the framework conditions of individual partner countries. A requirement of this strategic debate is to come to

a better understanding of the theoretical assumptions of transformation, and then to check the contemporary debates to determine which findings can be applied as an empirically stable basis of democracy support. Two decades after the end of the Cold War, a new assessment of democracy support is needed.

This briefing paper is based on the findings of two workshops on "New Challenges of Democracy Promotion," in Berlin and Brussels where the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung invited German and European experts and practitioners to discuss the theoretical foundations of democracy support and a new orientation of approaches and strategies.

## 2 What can we know? A critical review of popular theses

### *Any authoritarian reverse wave rolling?*

Building on Samuel Huntington's observation that previous waves of democratization were always followed by authoritarian reverse waves, some observers believe that they have already spotted a global trend towards "democracy backlash".<sup>2</sup> In fact, the number of democracies worldwide declined slightly in 2007 and 2008.

Based on data from the Freedom House Index or Transformation Index of the Bertelsmann Stiftung (BTI), the ebbing of the third wave of democratization can be observed in the late 1990s. Several remaining autocracies (petrocra- cies, successful modernization autocracies) appear to be truly resistant to the challenges of democratic change.<sup>3</sup> Since then, successful consolidations and failed democratization processes are about equal. Authoritarian relapses occurred primarily in the post-Soviet region, as well as in parts of Africa and Asia. Furthermore, in Latin America and in Eastern and Central Europe, the emergence of an anti-democratic populism can be spotted. Democratic wins and losses are particularly localized in the large gray area of hybrid regimes, defective democracies and moderate autocracies, that is, in the group which comprises 40% of regimes worldwide.

The overall global relationship between authoritarian regimes, defective democracies, and consolidated democracies, however, has not chan-

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. A. Lennon et al, *Democracy in U.S. Security Strategy: From Promotion to Support*, CSIS, March 2009; T. Carothers, *Stepping back from Democratic Pessimism*, Carnegie Paper 99, Feb. 2009; T. Carothers, *Revitalizing Democracy Assistance, The Challenge of USAID*, Carnegie Report, October 2009.

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<sup>2</sup> Freedom House et al., *Nations in Transit 2009*; L. Diamond, *The Spirit of Democracy*, New York 2008.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. A. Croissant/ P. Thiery, *Dritte Gegenwelle, Erosion der Demokratie oder Persistenz der defekten Demokratien?* in: Bertelsmann Stiftung (ed.), *Bertelsmann Transformation Index 2010*, Gütersloh 2009.

ged significantly over the past ten years. From the spectacular authoritarian rollbacks in key states such as Russia, Venezuela, Thailand, and Nigeria one can not conclude that there is a worldwide counterwave. However, the records of the political impact of the financial and economic crisis have not yet been taken into account. Whether the often fragile democratic processes in developing countries can also withstand the feared massive economic and social dislocation remains to be seen.

### ***Are young democracies less efficient than autocracies?***

The widespread expectation that democracy leads to economic development and stability has been disappointed by the transformation difficulties of young democracies. It is disputed whether the inefficiency of young democratic regimes delegitimizes democratic processes in the population and provides authoritarian-oriented elites (due to the apparent success of authoritarian development models) the chance to "roll back".<sup>4</sup>

The BTI indicators reveal economic weaknesses of defective democracies in nearly all categories.<sup>5</sup> The output of young democracies (often developing countries) is low in comparison to established democracies (mostly industrial nations). The numbers make it plausible that many citizens, who place great hope in democratic change, could now be disappointed and no longer actively support democratization processes. In some transformation societies, self-styled saviors use this disappointment for their own political agendas. Of course the poor performance of defective democracies is not the only conceivable reason that citizens are dissatisfied. But despite all the problems, the majority of citizens in all regions of the world still consider democracy the best form of government.<sup>6</sup> It re-

mains to be seen, however, whether this preference for democracy will continue in light of continued poor government performance.

Conversely, there is no indication that defective democracies perform worse than autocracies. On the contrary, defective democracies perform better than autocracies at large in all evaluated categories.<sup>7</sup> One exception is "economic development," in which average growth over the last fifty years was almost identical in autocracies and democracies.<sup>8</sup>

The picture changes, however, when defective democracies are contrasted with strong performing autocracies (Gulf States, China, Singapore, Malaysia, Vietnam). In many areas of performance, the group of strong performing authoritarian economies is able to catch up with established democracies and leave the defective democracies in the shade in the categories socio-economic development level, economic performance, and welfare regime (with the indicators social safety nets and equality of opportunity) as well as regarding the indicator of educational sustainability.<sup>9</sup> This result is hardly surprising, as the high-performing autocracies have a GDP per capita twice as high compared to defective democracies. Despite their economic shortcomings, defective democracies still perform better when it comes to market organization, currency and price stability and private property. It seems more surprisingly that the exact same picture is repeated if one contrasts defective democracies with a group of "moderate autocracies", encompassing a majority of poor developing countries<sup>10</sup>: the moderate autocracies are also superior to the defective democracies in those categories.<sup>11</sup> The statistical effect of rich countries lifting the average may have more to do with this than the system quality itself. However, it is notable that amongst the eleven highest performing autocracies, there are not less than eight moderate autocracies.

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<sup>4</sup> M. Saxer, *Performance matters, Challenges for the democratic model and democracy promotion*, IPG 3/2009; M. Saxer, *Demokratie schafft Entwicklung. Neue Diskurshegemonie für das demokratische Entwicklungsmodell*, NGFH, Nov. 2009; T. Carothers, *Stepping back from democratic pessimism*, loc. cit., p.11ff, International IDEA Report, Democracy in Development – Global consultations on the EU's role in democracy building, Stockholm 2009.

<sup>5</sup> Level of socioeconomic development, organization of the market and competition, currency and price stability, private property, welfare regime, economic performance, and sustainability, cf. Transformation Index BTI 2008.

<sup>6</sup> T. Carothers quotes several surveys in "Stepping back", loc. cit., p. 11.

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<sup>7</sup> Transformation Index BTI 2008.

<sup>8</sup> Przeworski et al, *Democracy and development : political institutions and well-being in the world, 1850-1990*, Cambridge 2000, p. 271; Transformation Index BTI 2008, p. 78.

<sup>9</sup> H. Hartmann, *Zur Performanz defekter Demokratien*, FES Workshop Paper, 17.9.2009.

<sup>10</sup> Singapore, Malaysia, Armenia, Nigeria, Kuwait, Togo, Bhutan, Venezuela, Bahrain, Kyrgyzstan, Algeria, Yemen, Egypt, Qatar, Kazakhstan, United Arab Emirates, Cambodia, Belarus, Morocco, Rwanda, Cameroon and Jordan fall into this category, cf. Transformation Index BTI 2008.

<sup>11</sup> H. Hartmann, loc. cit.

An entirely different story might be the effects of the financial crisis on regime stability. Decreasing resources and shrinking room for maneuver hurt the ability of democracies and autocracies alike to advance the conditions of their citizens' life. In their view, throwbacks in prosperity and development challenge the competence of the political system to solve problems. While defective democracies can partly compensate this lack of output legitimacy by input legitimacy (through elections, political participation and the guarantee of civil liberties), autocracies can only step up repression.<sup>12</sup>

The superior performance of democracies at large compared with autocracies as a whole should have been suitable to refute the attractiveness of authoritarian development models. The discourse of "superior authoritarian development models" in no way, however, refers to the discredited and highly repressive kleptocracies, but exclusively to the emerging high-performing autocracies. This reference may be arbitrary—however the narrative wins its persuasiveness through the reference to widely circulated success stories.

### ***Do authoritarian powers promote autocracy?***

Above all, the increasingly strong authoritarian powers China and Russia, but also Venezuela and Iran, are assumed to be directly promoting authoritarian rollbacks in their neighboring countries and beyond ("China in Africa"). By now, the empirical proof for this thesis is missing by critics, who are often geopolitically motivated.

Admittedly, the preferences of authoritarian regional powers for authoritarian satellites could be explained theoretically.<sup>13</sup> Because of their specific logic of domination, autocracies are better exploited, as far as both raw materials and political concession are concerned. In contrast, democratic neighbors run the risk of "democratic contamination," either by the diffusion of information and values, or through the active support of democratic strength in the authoritarian regional power itself. This preference can explain why Russia specifically stabilizes the au-

thoritarian regimes in Belarus and Central Asia, and China the dictatorships in North Korea and Burma. Indeed, it is to be expected that this preference must be measured by overriding interests for stability as well as geopolitical motives. From a Russian or Chinese perspective, transformation countries with their typical upheavals like conflicts, troubles with economic reorganization, and political instability are undesirable. If the democratic neighbor is stable, however, it is to be expected that the preference for autocracy lags. Hence, the active promotion of autocracies by China and Russia is not only empirically unaddressed, a consideration of the active export of their own ideologies and regimes is also not to be expected.

This question has to be distinguished, however, from the systemic effects of the rise of authoritarian powers on the one hand, and from the discursive appeal of the authoritarian model of development on the other. Not because of ideological reasons, but to safeguard their political and economic interests, both China and Russia establish themselves as patrons far beyond their own regions. Through their growing power, they can undermine incentives and sanctions by Western democracy supporters: granting protection from political sanctions; nullifying conditionalities through alternative credit and investments; strengthening authoritarian-oriented elites or regimes through weapon sales, targeted investments or cheaper energy supplies.

Their economic development successes especially strengthen China's soft power and give a strong impetus to the discourse of the superior authoritarian development model in many transformation societies. Authoritarian-oriented elites in societies shaken by upheavals can plan authoritarian rollbacks, while in autocracies the narrative can be used to prevent democratic overtures.

China and Russia do not aggressively export their ideologies or regimes, but through their policies of self-interest, change the power ratio in many countries in favor of authoritarian-oriented elites. For western democracy supporters, the appearance of competing patrons means a reduction in opportunities to use incentives and sanctions to push or support liberalization and democratization processes. China and Russia do not directly promote autocracy—their advancement, however, worsens the outlook for further democratization.

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<sup>12</sup> S. Donner/ H. Hartmann, Transformation Index 2010, Politische Gestaltung im internationalen Vergleich, 2009, S. 10f; S. Donner/ H. Hartmann, Einführung, Transformationsindex BTI 2010, S.17; M. Saxer, *Performance matters*, loc. cit., S.82f.

<sup>13</sup> J. Bader/ J. Gravingholt/ A. Kästner, *Do Autocracies Promote Autocracy?*, Paper for presentation at the panel "Emerging Powers Exporting Their Regimes?", 5th ECPR General Conference, Potsdam, 10.–12. September 2009

### 3 What should we believe? The state of the theoretical debates

Over the past decades, the field of transformation studies and its younger spin-off democracy support research have been dominated by fads, which mostly refer back to developments at the time.<sup>14</sup> In the most vulgar forms, these trends have also reached the praxis of democracy support.

In the euphoria over the course of the latest democratization wave and influenced by the state-skeptical Washington Consensus, actor-centric theoretical approaches dominated the 1980s and the early 1990s. In this view, a democratic reform of the political regime was possible when the relevant elites could agree on it or the democratizers in the opposition and inside the regime could keep the upper hand over the hardliners.<sup>15</sup> Structural preconditions were underestimated in favor of the formative power of the elites. Frustrated by the dysfunctionality of political parties and constitutional bodies, and inspired by the successes of civil rights movements, democracy support in practice turned to the support of civil society actors with great enthusiasm.

After it turned out that a large number of young democracies in no way followed a historically determined path to consolidation, but on the contrary that a large group of “democracies with adjectives” remained stuck in the transition or the democratization collapsed altogether, the transformation researchers turned once again to the structural factors for the consolidation of democracies: the degree of economic development, the power of social classes, and the efficiency of the bureaucracy again came to the center of attention. After the bankruptcy of the Washington Consensus, the United Nations as well as the Bretton Woods Institutions tried to improve the performance of states by “good governance.”

Discouraged by the failure of a series of democratization processes and frightened by the rise of authoritarian powers, a new pessimism emerged after the turn of the millennium, which was further deepened by the failure of Bush’s “regime change” politics. Consequently, a new debate over the validity of fundamental knowledge of transformation research emerged. Politically, the

transition paradigm<sup>16</sup> and the effectiveness of external democracy support were challenged. Not for nothing are Western democracy supporters now reevaluating their strategies and approaches on a wider front. Sobered by the lack of roots of externally promoted civil society organizations, many democracy supporters turned once again to classic actors like political parties<sup>17</sup>.

#### Sequencing debates

The sequencing debates of the past few years questioned whether specific preconditions must be fulfilled<sup>18</sup> so that democratization processes have a prospect of success: does democracy need a certain development level? A functioning statehood in terms of a monopoly on the legitimate use of force and effective administration? Or can democracy only arise from a state already established under the rule of law? Hence, for some time it has been discussed whether the external support of basic democratic rights and institutions could be counterproductive for the transition process in some circumstances.

Concealed behind these theoretical debates are key practical issues: Could early or “unfree and unfair” elections be detrimental for a democratization process?<sup>19</sup> Which degree of “irregularities” should the international community be prepared to accept in favor of the stability of a country? Do democratization processes follow a “path”, and so once chosen lead to failed transformations with a proven higher susceptibility for internal and external conflicts? Should one politically coopt warlords in order to end the violence and achieve a minimum of stability, thus building up a state—though by doing so, put the democratization process in the hands of those who have no interest in it?

Such issues explain the large interest for better theoretical foundation in democracy support. Surely, a conclusive explanation of the optimal succession of sequences would be useful in the

<sup>14</sup> In the following, cf. W. Merkel, *Systemtransformation. Theorien und Analysen*, Berlin 2009; O. Schlumberger/ R. Karadag, *Demokratisierung und Transformationsforschung*, in: Barrios, *Einführung in die comparative politics*, München 2006.

<sup>15</sup> W. Merkel, loc. cit.

<sup>16</sup> T. Carothers, *The End of the transition paradigm*, *Journal of Democracy* Vol. 13 Nr. 1, Jan 2002, p. 5-21; O. Schlumberger/ R. Karadag, *Demokratisierung und Transformationsforschung*, loc. cit., p. 249.

<sup>17</sup> T. Carothers, *Confronting the Weakest Link. Aiding Political Parties in New Democracies*, Carnegie 2006.

<sup>18</sup> The term „sequencing” is also commonly used to describe the strategic prioritization of approaches in transitional phases or sequences in the use of instruments without pointing to any preconditions. For better accuracy of discrimination, the term prioritization is preferable in those cases.

<sup>19</sup> J. Snyder, *Elections as Milestones and Stumbling Blocks for peaceful democratic consolidation*, paper prepared for FES conference on “Risking Elections”, Berlin, 2.-3.11.2009.

conception of democracy support. At this stage, the scholarly debates have never even reached the required degree of clarity to be able to make reliable statements about the course of democratization processes, let alone be able to make recommendations for optimal sequences.

In the strategies of practical democracy supporters, such considerations play a subordinate roll. In the concrete project work, sequencing lies in most cases not in the hands of external actors, or sequenced plans could quickly become waste paper due to the developments on the ground. Ever more troublesome, authoritarian-oriented elites could politically misuse the stability argument to prevent or roll back democratic openings. In this way, a dangerous political argument results from an ineligible instrument of strategy planning.

### **Modernization Theory**

Modernization theory as an overarching theory proves itself to be surprisingly adaptable. Although modernization theory can not explain transformations comprehensively, the questions derived at least lead to partially empirically corroborated statements. It proves that economic growth and social inequality have a significant influence, not on the initiation of democratic processes but on the consolidation of democracy. Ethic and religious fragmentation are, in contrast, a hindrance to consolidation.<sup>20</sup>

In recent literature, the argument is made that it is not economic development and the fragmentation of societal interests that promote democracy, but its associated changes in values. Another approach places the aggregate education level at the center of the explanation.

These corroborated findings provide orientation on the course of democratization. However, they are insufficient for a resilient theoretical foundation for democracy support.

### **Strategy building needs theoretical models**

Rightly, we criticize democracy support praxis of operating solely with unacceptably abridged versions of transformation research. But as long as this discipline disagrees whether its paradigms have existed at all (end of the transition paradigm), is occupied with theoretical soul searching (typification and classification) and politically dangerous games (sequencing debates), and finally, offers no theories that can satisfactorily explain even the simplest individual cases,<sup>21</sup> then

they should not wonder that the praxis is closed to the available findings.

The deteriorating opportunity conditions force an enhanced effectiveness for democracy support, which is unreachable without a resilient theoretical model. The indications, based on sound findings from the context of individual cases that develop recommendations for action is correct, but do not continue to the formation of strategy. Democracy support strategies only develop through the exchange of experiences based on common guiding questions, and the questions must be answered with whichever priorities and directions an organization has positioned itself in order to focus the use of its financial and human resources.

## **4 What should we do? New strategies for democracy support**

### **Focus on individual comparative advantages**

Democracy supporter face a strategic dilemma. On the one hand, worsening opportunity conditions are limiting the incentives and sanctions of western actors, as well as the leeway and influence of external democracy promoters. It is not only a matter of finding an answer to new competition from authoritarian patrons and an alternative development model; after the excesses of the Bush era, the United States and Europe are under pressure to justify themselves both domestically and fiscally. This pressure speaks to strategic focus and prioritization.

On the other hand, the experiences of the last decade show that it is not enough to concentrate the support on specific actors, institutions, or sectors. Democracy consolidation is more difficult to achieve when it is not accompanied by human development, internal and external security, and effective improvement of the bureaucracy. It isn't sufficient to introduce democratic principles and set up effective institutions. Democracy can first consolidate when a pluralistic political culture can sustainably support the emancipation of disadvantaged groups, the democratic solution to conflicts, and differences of opinions and ideas.

Western democracy supporters must find strategic answers to these dilemmas. In Germany there is not only a lack of such an overarching strategy, but also of the coherence and coordination of many democracy support approaches and ac-

<sup>20</sup> E.Kapstein/ N. Converse, *Why democracies fail*, JoD Vol 19, Oct. 2008.

<sup>21</sup> O. Schlumberger/ R. Karadag, loc. cit., p. 249.

tors. On the European level<sup>22</sup> and ever more so at the international level, the lack of a strategic principal or a grand strategy is immanent. In the absence of grand strategies and their associated role distribution, democracy supporters should take their capacity limits seriously and keep in mind their comparative advantages.

For some organizations, it is thus recommended to concentrate on direct democracy support, that is to say, to strengthen the functional cores of democracy such as the enforcement of democratic principles in all sectors of the society, to strengthen pro-democracy actors, and to improve the capacity of democratic institutions. Other institutions have comparative advantages in the area of indirect democracy support, such as the effective establishment of statehood, conflict resolution, or the promotion of human development. With regard to the promotion of wider socio-cultural agendas, democracy supporters should orient themselves in terms of windows of opportunity in the country context and implement support programs coordinated with other actors.

In the establishment of effective democratic structures, the blind export of institutional forms of established northern democracies should be renounced. Among the specifics—conflict formations, traditions, and the framework conditions of young democracies—-independent institutional forms may contribute more to democratic consolidation than superficial technocratic support.

### **Sub-strategies for Cluster groupings**

Under worsening opportunity conditions, democracy supporters have to bring more effective, accurate resources and instruments into action. That means, global blueprints are doomed to failure. Should the limited opportunities of democracy supporters to influence have a chance of success, they must be tailor-made to fit the specific context of partner countries and their respective region. Priorities and the right mix of instruments must be set in individual, context specific and flexible country (or even province) strategies.

If the strategic discussion is limited to small-scale country strategies, one throws away the chance

for cross-regional exchange of experience within and between different kinds of organizations. Traditional regional strategies should fill these methodological intermediate steps. In most regions, however, the countries are extremely heterogeneous with framework conditions that are hardly comparable. In order to meet the demands of the heterogeneity of the preconditions, democracy supporters must use the most different approaches—even within the same region.

Hence, another intermediate methodological step seems preferable: the development of sub-strategies for groupings of countries with similar framework conditions (Cluster).<sup>23</sup> Beyond the academic question of whether these groups should be understood analytically as “types” or “classes”<sup>24</sup>, several recent contributions to strategy development offer only a few general recommendations and refer instead to a set of contexts typically found in a group of countries (clusters).<sup>25</sup> So far, the Cluster grouping are not congruent. Mostly, however, Clusters are grouped around “Fragile and Failing states”, “Arbitrary/ Totalitarian Rule”, “Transitional Countries/ Hybrid Regimes,” and finally, “Consolidating Democracies”.

Based on an analysis of the typical structure and dynamics for a particular Cluster, sub-strategies can be developed, in which direction, priorities, and mixes of instruments outline the possible contribution of democracy support. The Cluster strategies form, in a series of steps, the point of departure and frame of reference for the development of individual country strategies.

The proposal for the composition of clusters which I introduced into the debate,<sup>26</sup> places the political character of democracy support at the center of considerations. The layout of the Clusters based on criteria like “mechanisms of domination” or “balance of power and orientations inside the elites” has been chosen carefully to foster analysis that can eventually help to prepare strategic decisions. This is especially true for the broad gray area of the countries that fall between “moderate autocracy” and “defective democracy.” A key question is how one assesses the balance of power between pro-democratic

<sup>22</sup> To tackle these shortcomings, and following the joint working paper of Commission and Council, and the resolution of the EU Parliament, the Council of the European Union adopted on Nov. 17, 2009 the Conclusions on democracy Support in the EU’s external relations.

<sup>23</sup> M. Saxer, *Performance matters*, loc. cit., p.93ff.

<sup>24</sup> For an overview, see O. Schlumberger/ R. Karadag, loc. cit., p. 249.

<sup>25</sup> J. Grävingholt/ J. Leininger/ O. Schlumberger, *Demokratieförderung: Kein Ende der Geschichte*, DIE Analyse 1/2009; W. Merkel, loc. cit., p. 25ff; EU Commission/ Council General Secretariat, Joint paper, SEC (2009) 1095 final, 27.7.2009.

<sup>26</sup> M. Saxer, *Performance matters*, loc. cit., p.93ff.

and authoritarian actors in a country. From this genuinely political assessment in each individual case, the strategic decision will result either to cooperate with pro-democracy forces within or outside of a regime, or to increase the "pressure bottom up" by empowering civil society actors in the broader population. I have tried to depict this political character by grouping Clusters not around regime types (authoritarian versus democratic), but around opposing Elite orientations and mechanisms of dominance. In the broad gray area of (pre-)transition countries, it might be helpful for strategy building to distinguish between "Progressive" and "Pre-modern" Clusters. While in the progressive Cluster, a (fragile) majority of elites has made the decision to democratize the political system, dominance in the pre-modern clusters largely rests on the reciprocal deal of loyalty for patronage. For practical strategy building, a proper assessment of the ever-changing balance of power between pro-democratic and authoritarian-oriented actors, is more relevant than the delicate task of classifying regime types. After a "coup" on the one side or "free elections" on the other, for example, one would need to attribute a change of regime type, but in fact the underlying structures and dynamics of a country in transition change very little in the short-term. Therefore, it makes sense to take a stronger analytical look at the functional mechanisms of domination and to work towards changing the balance of power in favor of pro-democracy actors. The detailed analysis of the mechanisms of domination of a Cluster offers criteria for the strategic decision to support pro-democratic actors in democratization attempts. Whether this strategy is to be pursued with a top-down approach by supporting pro-democratic elites inside or outside the regime or a bottom-up approach by empowering actors in the broader population, is another strategic decision that Cluster analyses can help to prepare.

The Clusters have the advantage of being able to systematically introduce the findings of democracy support research and practical experiences in historical constellations and across regions into strategy building. For example, instead of generally discussing the tension between state-building and democracy support, these issues could make a valuable contribution to sub-strategy building in the specific Cluster of "Failing/ Fragile States."

### ***Steering the discourse to support democratic models of development***

Democracy supporters have to react pro-actively to the discursive challenges posed by a allegedly "more effective authoritarian development model", and have to intensify efforts to increase the attractiveness of the democratic development model. A solely normative reasoning is no longer sufficient. When it comes to discourse, it is irrelevant that there is no empirical proof for the alleged superiority of the authoritarian model of development. To challenge the democratic development model, lies in the interest of authoritarian-oriented elites. However, the economic successes of a select group of authoritarian developing states (the authoritarian modernizers in East Asia and the Gulf States) and the commodity price driven temporary strengthening of rent-seeking authoritarian states (Russia, Iran, Venezuela) are perceived worldwide and give buoyancy to the authoritarian development discourse. In essence, this discourse claims that the creation of necessary infrastructure, but also the prioritization of economic development, is achieved more effectively through state control, and the inevitable disruptions of the transition are only manageable by close political control or repression. According to this, democracies dependent upon compromise and integration lack this effectiveness and the democratic fragmentation of political power leads—under the conditions of transformation—to the outbreak of conflicts. Especially in the turmoil of the transformation of troubled developing countries, this discourse develops a special power of persuasion and thus plays into the hands of authoritarian promises of salvation.

Democracy support must question the myth of authoritarian success. As discussed above, it can be proved empirically that democracies in general perform better in all categories than autocracies at large. Despite all current geopolitical and economic troubles, Western democracies can still point to their own success stories. A number of strong arguments for the superiority of democratic development models can be derived from democracy, modernization, and development theories: e.g. socio-cultural opens as a prerequisite of creativity and innovation; the stabilizing effect of socially inclusive policies and democratic conflict settlement mechanism; and the superiority of specialized autonomous subsystems in managing highly complex economic and societal systems. A key challenge will be to assertively highlight the long-term advantages of democratic development models in order to re-

cover the lost discourse hegemony of democratic models. Local democracy supporters cannot perform this task alone, here the political and academic community is also asked to connect the existing fragmentary findings on democratization and development processes with compelling ideas and clear messages in favor of the democratic development model.

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