

The Standard Lament

In the global democratic trend that flourished in the last quarter of the twentieth century, approximately one hundred countries in the developing world and the former Soviet bloc experienced at least some movement away from authoritarian or totalitarian rule toward political openness. The outcomes of many of these attempted democratic transitions are still very much in question. It is unfortunately evident that many of the heady hopes for a better political future that soared around the world in the peak years of what Samuel Huntington labeled democracy's "Third Wave" will be disappointed.¹ Nevertheless the world has experienced a tremendous increase in the amount of political pluralism and competition, including a remarkable growth in the number and seriousness of multiparty elections.

With those changes has come an enormous surge in the number and range of political parties in many parts of the developing and postcommunist worlds. Parties mushroomed when elections were first held after the fall of authoritarian regimes, sometimes numbering more than a hundred. Usually the very high number of parties fell as successive elections were held, but parties have remained numerous and active in most Third Wave societies, or what I call new or struggling democracies. Throughout these countries, political activists have devoted enormous amounts of time and energy during the past few decades to building political parties. Hundreds of millions of citizens in these countries have familiarized themselves with the often bewilderingly dense new array of parties, making choices among them, and sometimes investing hope in them.

Although political parties are becoming much more numerous and active in the developing and postcommunist worlds, this is by no means their golden age. In fact this period of remarkable growth in political parties around the world has an enormous, dark underside: Throughout the developing and postcommunist worlds, political parties are held in extremely low regard; in most of these countries they are the least respected or trusted of any public institution.²

In my research on democratization and democracy promotion in recent years I have encountered this low regard for political parties firsthand everywhere I go. I have been very struck not only by the ubiquity and intensity of the negative views that people hold vis-à-vis their political parties but also by the similarity of these views across drastically different political contexts. When one asks people almost anywhere in Asia, Central and Eastern Europe, East and Southeast Asia, Latin America, the Middle East, South Asia, the former Soviet Union, and sub-Saharan Africa about their political parties, one is almost always answered with harsh statements of disgust and disrespect. People come forward with scathing criticisms about parties that sound almost uncannily similar wherever one is. The main elements of this critique, which upon repeated hearing I have come to call “the standard lament” about parties, are the following:

- Parties are corrupt, self-interested organizations dominated by power-hungry elites who only pursue their own interests or those of their rich financial backers, not those of ordinary citizens.
- Parties do not stand for anything; there are no real differences among them. Their ideologies are symbolic at best and their platforms vague or insubstantial.
- Parties waste too much time and energy squabbling with each other over petty issues for the sake of meaningless political advantages rather than trying to solve the country’s problems in a constructive, cooperative way.
- Parties only become active at election time when they come looking for your vote; the rest of the time you never hear from them.
- Parties are ill-prepared for governing the country and do a bad job of it when they do manage to take power or gain places in the national legislature.

In different countries one sometimes hears additional points of indictment about their parties, emphasizing issues that may be particular to that political scene, such as a party leader known for especially flagrant misbehav-

ior, collusion between the opposition and the ruling party, or cheating by the ruling party in the last election. The standard lament is a common core narrative in almost all new or struggling democracies, but not necessarily always the full story of the public's unhappiness with parties.

Are Parties Really So Troubled?

Confronted with the rising tide of discontent about political parties in new and struggling democracies, some political observers are unalarmed. It is natural for citizens in a democracy to be disgruntled with their parties, they assert, and parties in established democracies have themselves been suffering an erosion of respect and loyalty over the past several decades. In fact, they argue, the rabid dislike of parties in new or struggling democracies may actually be a positive sign. It shows that citizens are avoiding any blind faith in their politicians and instead expecting tangible performance from them and punishing them when they do not deliver.

Appealing though this point of view may be, it risks passing too quickly by the very real, serious problems that parties in many new or struggling democracies have. It settles too easily for a facile equivalence between the skepticism or cynicism that citizens of established democracies often feel toward their parties, and the harsh, bitter disregard for political parties that has become common in new or struggling democracies.

It appears to be true that many citizens new to the messy realities of multiparty politics have a hard time distinguishing between, on the one hand, those negative elements of politics that although regrettable are essentially inevitable, and, on the other hand, those that are signs of serious political dysfunction. For example, they are horrified that politicians competing for power turn out to be self-serving and relentlessly ambitious. They are shocked by the unprincipled, hypocritical nature of so much of the behavior and rhetoric of politicians. They are disillusioned that parties reflexively fight over every little thing, turning even trivial issues into partisan skirmishes. They are angry that money plays such an important role in political campaigns. In short, there is a distinct "welcome to democracy" quality to some of the standard lament about political parties, as citizens confront the often disappointing realities of multiparty competition.

The devastating unpopularity of political parties in so many countries grappling with democratization also appears to be partly due to citizens blaming parties for many things that are not, strictly speaking, the parties' fault, or at least are not attributable to the deficient nature of parties as organizations.

Most of these countries, for example, have chronically weak, ineffective states that deliver poor services and lack the capacity to design and implement effective policies. They often have poorly performing economies or, even if growth is achieved, high levels of inequality and persistent poverty. Citizens of these countries naturally tend to become frustrated and angry about the poor services, harsh economic conditions, and other difficult elements of their lives that are related to the weakness of the states. They tend to cast a wide net of blame against the government and “the politicians” for such problems. Political parties, being closely wrapped up with the governing powers, often are blamed as well, even though the things about parties that irritate citizens, such as their corruption or self-interestedness, are not necessarily primary causes of the country’s poorly functioning economy or state. In other words, because the political parties of a country are the institutions that formally run the country, they will tend to be blamed for whatever goes wrong, no matter what the larger set of causes are for the country’s ills. And given that life for many citizens of countries attempting democratization is riddled with serious hardships and aggravations, it is not surprising that political parties, as a group, are an unpopular institution.

Undoubtedly many citizens new to pluralistic politics are having trouble sorting out which of the negative features of parties and politicians are unavoidable elements of democracy and which are really signs of serious trouble. They are blaming parties for many things that are not necessarily the result of shortcomings in the parties per se. Nevertheless, it is clear that political parties in many new or struggling democracies are indeed highly problematic organizations from the point of view of democratic development.

Most are what might be called political cabals or clubs—highly personalistic, leader-centric organizations in which an assertive, ambitious, often charismatic party leader, together with a set of close followers and associates, pursues political power through elections. Such parties tend to have weak organizations with few paid staff and often only a skeletal presence outside the capital. In extreme cases they are miniscule organizations, nicknamed “briefcase parties” in some societies (or “Toyota parties” in Peru, based on the idea that all their members can fit into a Toyota), that consist of no more than a self-appointed leader and a few followers. What party organization does exist is run in a command fashion by the party leader no matter what formal management structures and procedures have been established. The parties are usually financed by small numbers of wealthy backers, sometimes including the party leaders themselves. The identities of the parties’ main financial backers are usually kept secret and the party finances are controlled by the party leaders and man-

aged in a nontransparent fashion. These parties are primarily oriented toward campaigning. They swell in size and activity during electoral periods and diminish substantially outside them. They usually have little capacity for analyzing and formulating policies and their electoral platforms are collections of generic policy positions lacking any well-defined ideological orientation.

A small number of parties in new or struggling democracies—although often the more important of the parties in any one country—are somewhat more organizationally developed than the other, more common type. In some cases these larger parties have developed a substantial organization through slow growth over a long period of time with periods in power that have allowed them to make use of patronage and state resources to build up the party. Some of the older South American parties, such as those in Argentina, Chile, Colombia, and Uruguay, are of this type, as well as some of the older parties in South and Southeast Asia. In other cases, the larger parties are successors to precedent organizations from which they have been able to inherit resources, personnel, and institutional structures. These predecessor organizations may be former ruling parties in single-party systems, as in the former communist countries and some African countries, or liberation or other armed movements, as in parts of southern Africa and Central America.

Although these parties have more substantial organizations than the very personalistic parties described previously, and have often passed through several or even many party leaders, they nevertheless also usually remain quite centralized, top-down organizations in which the party leader and those immediately around the leader wield extensive power in all matters institutional. Party financing is often more extensive than in the less organizationally developed parties but still usually dependent on a limited set of behind-the-scenes backers (and state resources if the party is in power), and is handled from the top in nontransparent ways.

These more organizationally developed parties are also highly electorally oriented. They often have a stronger relationship to a defined constituency and membership that they attempt to service and protect, usually through patronage networks. They may have a certain ideological tradition, often based on the political ideas that were most popular in the developing world in the 1950s and 1960s, such as socialism or decolonization and nationalism. Yet their ideology has typically faded over time and has little connection with the policies they actually pursue, which are largely opportunistic or pragmatic.

Obviously this initial description of parties in new or struggling democracies is extremely broad-brush and leaves out many particularities and variants, which are considered in subsequent chapters. The point for now is that very gen-

erally speaking, political parties in these countries exhibit certain consistent features. Although they can be divided into categories of less and more organizationally developed, almost all display a tendency toward leader-centrism, top-down organizational management, nontransparent and often highly personalistic financing, relentless electoralism, and ideological vagueness. In short, the standard lament that so many citizens in new or struggling democracies have about their parties does indeed have roots in the reality of their parties, even taking into account the often excessively high expectations that citizens of these countries have at the start of the attempted democratic transitions.

The systems that are made up by the troubled parties of new or struggling democracies are, not surprisingly, fraught with problems as well. In chapter 3, I consider one framework for analyzing the different types of party systems in these countries. Here I highlight two of the principal problems that their party systems tend to exhibit. First, some of the party systems are unstable and volatile. New parties rise and fall quickly. Only a small number of parties last more than a few elections and in some cases none lasts more than a generation. Parties lack defined constituencies. Voters cycle through the choices on offer, embracing sudden enthusiasms and dropping them just as quickly after the initial thrill is gone. Not being able to count on a stable base, and facing extinction if they fail to score in elections, many parties in such systems have to work increasingly hard to try to win votes. This fuels their need for money to finance their campaigns, which pushes parties to multiply certain behaviors, such as corrupt financing and selling places on the party lists to the highest bidders, that only vitiate their credibility with citizens, thereby deepening the problems of unstable bases and aggravating the boom and bust cycle. Guatemala, Peru, the Philippines, Poland, Thailand, and Venezuela are all examples of countries with party systems that have shown high levels of instability in the past fifteen years.

Second, other party systems in new or struggling democracies have the opposite problem from instability. They are systems in which one or two parties, usually parties of the latter type described above—parties with substantial party organizations but a high degree of centralization, corruption, and other problematic features—have a virtual lock on the system. New political entrants are unable to gain a place in the system. A small closed circle of elites accumulates a large amount of power and the main parties are able to resist any pressure for reform due to their predominant position. Many countries in South America, sub-Saharan Africa, and the former Soviet Union have systems of this sort. If the system stays closed while performing poorly for the majority of citizens over a sustained period, pressure on it will accumulate. If

the pressure is not relieved through reforms it may lead to the rise of a strong antiparty challenger to the system, such as occurred in Venezuela in the 1990s with the rise of Hugo Chávez and Bulgaria in a milder form in the late 1990s, culminating in the coming to power in 2001 of a new political movement led by former King Simeon Saxe-Coburg-Gotha. Or the system may face sharp disjunctive change in which striving political actors or movements overwhelm the decayed or brittle established ones, as in Georgia in 2003 and Kyrgyzstan in 2005.

The Inevitability of Parties

Given the depth and pervasiveness of problems with parties, it is natural to ask whether it might not make sense just to give up on them, to look for other ways to institutionalize democratic politics. Perhaps, it can be asked, the widespread weaknesses of and unhappiness with parties is a sign of some deeper evolution in global politics away from parties altogether, one that should be embraced rather than resisted.

The idea of moving beyond political parties—simply jettisoning them with all their accumulated deficiencies—certainly holds appeal to people all around the world exasperated to the point of despair with the parties they have. The problem, however (leaving aside the fact that at least some parties in many new or struggling democracies are deeply entrenched and are not going away anytime soon), is that it is not clear what institutions or processes might replace them and fulfill the core democratic functions that parties, at least in theory, are supposed to fulfill.³ These functions are sometimes elaborated at great length by political scientists but basically boil down to several crucial things: in a well-functioning democracy, parties represent citizens' interests before the state (the terms *interest articulation* and *aggregation* are often used on this point), engage and involve citizens in democratic participation, structure the political choices that citizens have in elections, and form the governments and take responsibility for governing.

Perhaps the most common idea about possible “postparty” democracy is that a greatly strengthened civil society could take over from parties, redefining democratic politics as a complex set of disaggregated, pluralistic interactions between highly empowered citizens and that state. The presumed virtuous nature of many civil society organizations would replace the swamp-like nature of party politics.

It is difficult to envisage such a scenario actually occurring in any new or struggling democracies in the foreseeable future. It is true that in many civil

society organizations have multiplied rapidly, thanks in no small part to donor funding. The civil society boom consists in most cases of the proliferation of a narrow range of groups, mostly advocacy and service nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), that have serious limits of their own as a new form of interest representation. Many of these groups have surprisingly weak ties to the citizenry. They are self-appointed representatives of an assumed public interest, following the rather particularist agenda of a circumscribed set of activists (and often their foreign funders). Even if these NGO leaders were widely and fairly representative, it is not clear how a political system could function effectively with the very disaggregated nature of such representation, in which no organizations attempt to aggregate a broader pool of interests and issues. In those societies, such as the United States, where specialized interest groups are unusually strong, democracy does not seem to be transforming into a new and better form. Instead, political analysts usually lament the paralyzing and distorting effects of hypertrophic interest-group politics.

Visions of a civil society–based, nonparty democracy also fall short regarding the structuring of political choices and the organization of governance. For democracy to be meaningful, citizens must have some real choices between alternative sets of both people and policies. If parties do not exist to structure choices and run the government, some other organizations would have to fulfill that role. If the political choices presented to citizens were merely a scattering of individuals not organized in groups, it is hard to imagine how a government made up of such nonassociated individuals would function coherently. If the political choices were ordered in groups, it is hard to see how these groups would not quickly take on the characteristics of parties once they started competing for power, including the various familiar negative attributes, such as self-interest, corruption, and combative rivalries. Stated differently, if civil society organizations did become the organizing bodies for political competition and governance they would quickly lose whatever virtuous qualities they had once they were subjected to all the competitive pressures that make parties so problematic.

In short, although democracy is of course an evolving corpus of political ideas and practices that will take on new forms over time, it is difficult now to envisage a genuine democracy—with real political alternatives open to citizens and broad-based representation of citizens' interests—without political parties or some organizations very much like them. The fact that parties are falling so glaringly short in new or struggling democracies does not point to a path of doing without them. Although it is very hard to live with parties, if

one wants to make a serious attempt at democracy it remains necessary for now to live with them.

Consequences of Party Problems

Political parties are hardly the only problematic institutions in new or struggling democracies. Most of the major political institutions in these countries, whether executive branch ministries, legislatures, judiciaries, or local governments, are beset with serious shortcomings. Nevertheless, given the crucial democratic functions that political parties are expected to play, the consequences of troubled political party development are especially harmful.

Attempting to identify these consequences is complicated by the general difficulty of sorting out causes and effects when it comes to broad political phenomena. Is widespread political apathy in a country, for example, a result of the failings of the country's political parties or one of the factors that contributes to the difficulty of building effective parties? Should the existence of entrenched, corrupt patronage networks in a state bureaucracy be understood as a result of patronage-oriented parties or an impediment to the development of parties not rooted in patronage? The political fabric of any society cannot be separated into neat piles of causes and consequences. Interactive and sometimes circular relationships exist at every level.

Probably the most obvious and possibly the most serious negative consequence of the problematic party development common to so many new or struggling democracies is the inadequate representation of citizens' interests. Leader-centric parties with weak organizations, low policy capacity, and vague ideologies are poor at articulating and aggregating the interests of citizens. They usually fail to develop close, regular ties to a defined constituency. They concentrate on serving their own immediate interests, which are often the direct interests of their leaders or of the small circle of financial backers of the party. Even those parties that have managed to develop substantial organizations and roots in a defined constituency usually fall badly short on representation because their relationship to their constituency is based on patronage ties.

Inadequate representation of interests appears as one of the central problems facing new or struggling democracies. In Latin America, for example, the much-discussed crisis of democracy that the region faces is often cast in the region precisely as a dual crisis of representation and crisis of parties. All around the world in countries that have moved away from authoritarianism, citizens are very frustrated with their governments and their frustration is rooted in the sense that the government is not responding to their needs and

interests. Political analysts often describe new or struggling democracies as facing the challenges of going beyond formal or electoral democracy to substantive democracy. It is the problem of representation—establishing governments that are not merely elected by the people but actually serve the people—that lies at the core of this overall attempted passage.

Although the troubled state of political parties is clearly a central cause of the problem of representation, it is not the only one. The effective representation of citizens' interests in a democracy requires an interconnected set of sociopolitical conditions and institutions, including a citizenry capable of expressing its interests and a state capable of doing something meaningful to respond to citizens' needs. Political parties are a critical connective mechanism between citizens on the one hand and the state and government on the other, but they cannot operate in a vacuum. The atomized nature of many post-authoritarian polities—the fragmentation, low levels of trust, and weak associational life—often undermines the ability of citizens to work together to express their interests. The high levels of poverty and socioeconomic marginalization in many new or struggling democracies also work against active, empowered citizenries. At the other end of the potential representational chain, the state weakness endemic in many of these countries also contributes significantly to the problem of representation.

At least two other major negative consequences for democratization of problematic political parties are also apparent. Parties often fall badly short in the domain of political education or socialization of citizens into the democratic process. They do little to help citizens understand the how and why of democratic participation beyond voting. Their own ideological incoherence confuses rather than clarifies the choices citizens might make about possible directions for their society. Their often insalubrious involvement in money politics of one type or another distorts the nature of contacts they have with citizens and the political values they embody.

Troubled parties also do damage to democratization through poor fulfillment of their governmental function. When parties come to power or at least participate in government, they tend to import their internal pathologies into government. Party elites used to working in hierarchical, personalistic, and untransparent organizations carry those habits into the governmental roles they assume. Parties dependent on powerful, behind-the-scenes financial backers bring those unhealthy ties into the center of power. Parties that sell places on their candidate lists to wealthy political actors create members of parliament who think they need to steal sizeable amounts of money to make up for what they spent to get into power.

In short, it is clear that the state of political parties in these countries spells trouble for democratization. Major functions of political representation, political socialization, and governance are poorly fulfilled by any parties, with manifold effects throughout the political systems. A closer look at different transitions could certainly identify still other political problems that parties are creating or contributing to. As discussed later in this book, it can be hard to agree at times on what optimal political party development might look like in any one place. The basic point should be clear: The troubled state of parties in new or struggling democracies constitutes a weak link, indeed often the weakest link, in their attempted democratization.

The Aid Response

There is an international response to the troubled state of political party development in countries attempting democratization—international political party aid. A large array of Western political parties, party foundations or institutes affiliated with parties, specialized aid organizations that work closely with political parties, as well as a growing number of multilateral organizations (such as the United Nations Development Programme, the Organization of American States, and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe) carry out programs to bolster political party development all around the developing and postcommunist worlds.

The first phase of international political party aid was the work that the German *Stiftungen*, or party foundations, especially the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung, the Fredrich Ebert Stiftung, and the Friedrich Naumann Stiftung, did in Southern Europe and Latin America from the 1970s through the 1980s, the early years of democracy's Third Wave. They were joined in the mid-1980s by the two U.S. party institutes, the International Republican Institute (IRI) and the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI). As democracy spread in the late 1980s and across the 1990s, many European parties and party foundations, especially from France, Great Britain, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, and Sweden, joined the field. Party aid began reaching widely in Africa, Central and Eastern Europe, Latin America, and the former Soviet Union. In the current decade, the growing perception that political parties are doing poorly in many new or struggling democracies has prompted several Northern European countries, including Finland, the Netherlands, Norway, and Sweden, to get more deeply involved in political party aid, as well as some multilateral organizations, including the three mentioned above.

Party aid is one part of the larger domain of democracy aid, a field that has experienced enormous growth over the past several decades. Democracy aid has come to be made up of many specialized and often somewhat separate subfields. Aid for trade unions, for example, is carried out in fairly narrowly bounded programs by Western groups affiliated with trade unions. Media assistance is also its own domain, populated by media specialists working for Western media-affiliated organizations. Party aid also constitutes one of these subfields, with its own discrete programs carried out by its own set of specialized organizations, usually tied to Western political parties. Party aid is often even more separate than many other areas of democracy assistance. Quite a few parts of the democracy promotion community are wary of direct contact with parties. They perceive them as highly problematic potential partners, both because parties are openly political organizations and often have a reputation of being corrupt. Thus working with them carries a clear risk of being accused of engaging in partisan meddling or having corrupt counterparts. Simultaneously, many party aid groups cultivate a separation from other parts of the democracy aid domain, believing that they alone have the necessary expertise to work with parties and that the inherently political nature of party work naturally sets it apart from many of the other areas.

Analysis Missing

Although party aid has been going on for decades and has reached parties in probably close to one hundred countries, remarkably little has been written about it. Only a handful of articles or reports by policy analysts or scholars have been published on the subject.⁴ Some evaluations of party programs exist, usually sponsored by funders of party aid or occasionally by party aid groups themselves. Most of these evaluations are focused on specific country programs.⁵ They examine outputs of the programs, doing little to identify and assess basic assumptions and methods, judge the overall effects of such work, or attempt crossnational or crossregional comparisons. As new actors have joined the field in this decade they commonly ask what they should read to understand the state of the art. The answer they usually get is that there is little to read and that although some significant accumulated knowledge does exist about party aid, it is highly dispersed, being located largely in the minds of experienced individual practitioners.

This paucity of reflective, analytic assessments of past work and a corresponding dispersion of accumulated wisdom are not just characteristic of party aid but of democracy aid generally. I highlighted some of the reasons for

this shortage in my 1999 book, *Aiding Democracy Abroad*, and the situation has only changed modestly since then. Democracy promoters tend not to reflect systematically on their work. They are action-oriented people and organizations, much more inclined to throw themselves into the next challenge than to take time to analyze carefully and critically what they did last. Funders of such work create few incentives for probing retrospection, pushing implementing organizations to deliver rapid results and rush from one assignment to the next. Democracy promoters are not only action-oriented, they are also often infused with a certain missionary spirit, a belief that their work is by nature valuable and good, which also inhibits critical self-reflection.

The scholarly community has been noticeably slow to take up the topic. Many of the issues presented by democracy aid are too applied to be of interest to scholars rewarded for advancing or attacking theoretical frameworks. Democracy aid falls in between academic disciplines, touching on international relations, comparative politics, law, and various others, but belonging squarely to none. Many scholars have not seen this domain as being especially significant, incorrectly dismissing it either as an area of little real import or just heavy-handed Cold War-style U.S. political interventionism revisited.

This lack of outside analysis and writing is starting to change, at least with respect to some parts of the democracy promotion field. Some useful writings on international efforts to promote free and fair elections, civil society development, and postconflict political construction, for example, have started to appear. Party aid, however, remains at the other end of the scale in terms of outside attention. To the extent it receives public attention, it comes as broadsides and pushback from certain autocratic governments accusing party aid actors of political meddling—attention that contributes some heat to the subject but not much light.

As a result, no extensive, up-to-date analytic treatment of party aid exists that answers basic questions about this vital, growing domain:

- What are the main characteristics of political parties in new or struggling democracies and what causes parties in such a varied set of countries to have a very similar set of problematic organizational and operational characteristics?
- Are the deficiencies of parties in new or struggling democracies basically similar to or different from the problems of parties in established democracies?
- What are the main contours and dimensions of the party aid response to the problems of political parties in new or struggling democracies—

who are the main actors, what are the principal types of activities, what methods are used, and what are the goals?

- What are the strengths and weaknesses of party aid, and what innovations are being tried?
- What political interests do party aid programs serve and, in particular, are they used to favor particular parties for the sake of influencing electoral outcomes?
- What effects does party aid have?
- What is the future of party aid? How can it be strengthened and what is reasonable to expect of it?

Aim, Structure, and Basis of the Book

This book aims to provide such an account. It offers an analytic overview of the state of political parties in new or struggling democracies and the world of political party aid, and at least preliminary answers to the aforementioned questions. It is not possible in this modest volume to attempt a comprehensive history or record of international party assistance, a history that would require an enormous amount of research to recover and tell (much of it not being written down anywhere and existing only in people's memories). The goal is to arrive at least at a stocktaking of where the field is and where it is likely going.

The book has a two-part structure. The first two chapters after this introduction set up the analysis of party aid by examining the state of political parties in new or struggling democracies. Chapter 2 provides a quick region-by-region tour of the evolution and state of parties in the developing and postcommunist worlds. Chapter 3 presents an explanation of why parties in new or struggling democracies are troubled and a framework for analyzing party systems in these countries. The remainder of the book concentrates on party aid. Chapter 4 is an overview of party aid—its principal actors, evolution, and method. Chapter 5 critically examines the standard method and identifies innovations that some organizations are attempting to make. Chapter 6 delves into the interests behind party aid and the issue of partisanship. Chapter 7 assesses the effects of party aid. Chapter 8 considers a new, rapidly growing part of the field—programs aimed at changing party systems rather than individual parties. Chapter 9 summarizes the main arguments of the earlier chapters and explores how party aid might go deeper through greater explicit attention to power and politics.

My analysis, both of the state of political parties and of party aid in new or struggling democracies, is based on several sources. First, in writing the book I carried out field research on parties and party aid in six country case studies, one each from the major regions of the developing and postcommunist worlds: Guatemala, Indonesia, Morocco, Mozambique, Romania, and Russia. No small set of case studies can be perfectly representative. I chose these countries not just for their geographic diversity but on the basis of two criteria: (1) in each of these countries the state of political parties has some important characteristics in common with the state of parties in other countries in the region (although party development is too varied in some regions to have what might be considered a typical regional pattern); and (2) party aid providers are active in each of these countries, and have been active for at least five years, allowing at least some temporal perspective on the work.

For each case study, I read extensive amounts of academic, policy-oriented, and journalistic writing about the country's current politics and political history, with a focus on the evolution of its political parties. Then in research trips to each country between late 2003 and mid-2005, I interviewed a total of approximately 150 persons involved in politics or in party aid—representatives of party aid groups and donor agencies, political party leaders, party cadres, and local branch activists, parliamentarians, journalists, lawyers, and scholars. In four of the countries (Guatemala, Morocco, Romania, and Russia), I had previously carried out research and writing on democracy aid and democratization, stretching back to the mid-1980s or early 1990s in some of those cases, and thus was building in the case study research on an existing foundation of at least some firsthand exposure and knowledge. I do not present the country case studies as separate chapters in the book. Rather, I integrate findings from them throughout the book.

To gain broader knowledge about party aid beyond the case studies, I also carried out in the same period approximately thirty interviews in the headquarters of various major U.S., European, and multilateral organizations involved in party aid and in the bilateral aid agencies or foreign ministries that fund them. I also drew on hundreds of formal interviews, informal meetings, and conversations I have had with both providers and recipients of party aid in my broader research and consulting work on democracy aid over the course of the last twenty years.