

# 3 THE DIPLOMAT'S TOOL BOX

## INTRODUCTION

Scholars in the social sciences that were consulted in the preparation of this *Handbook* have recommended a ranking of “best practices” in an evidence-based analysis from the growing catalogue of examples of democracy development support. Clearly, some support practices will be more effective than others, depending on the circumstances and the mix of contextual issues. There are several ongoing analytical exercises that attempt to provide evidence-based guidance, such as the various conferences and workshops organized under the aegis of the Oslo Governance Centre of the UN Development Programme, working, for example, with the Norwegian Peacebuilding Resource Centre and the Jordan-based Foundation for the Future. But there is reluctance within the Community of Democracies to either generalize or theorize with prescriptive recommendations. In this chapter, the *Handbook* follows methodology that is fact-based and descriptive rather than prescriptive, but attempts to identify some general principles and approaches by citing specific cases of diplomatic engagement.

## FIVE CAVEATS

The *Handbook* assumes that most foreign ministries of democratic countries accept a need to adapt their bilateral diplomatic representation to the new paradigms of public diplomacy, even though, as noted, differences persist in national practices of providing visible support to civil society’s efforts to advance democracy development. But there are five noteworthy caveats:

- At any time, a country usually has a range of public and discrete interests engaged in a bilateral relationship. Diplomats in the field need to manage the range of interests simultaneously and effectively. Support for human rights and democracy development is a value-based interest. Yet, there are many examples of human rights concerns and democracy support being soft-pedalled so that security or economic goals in play in a relationship with an authoritarian country are not undermined. (The example of the European

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Union lifting sanctions on Uzbekistan without human rights improvement is especially egregious.) The truth is that democracies do not have to pursue interests in the belief that it must be at the expense of their values, or vice-versa. The notion that there is a conflict between interests and values is false; rather, they are interdependent. The support of democratic values is generally in the national interests of a democracy's diplomacy. Successfully managing interests in a bilateral relationship can usually build influence necessary for the support of the rights of local civil society. Apart from consistency with declared values of solidarity, the spread of democracy and rule of law buttress international security as well as protection for investment and trade. Democratically elected partners interrelate in ways that favour predictability and assurance in international relations.

- The capitals' empowerment of local diplomatic initiative can be crucial, within a clear understanding of the interests and aims of the overall mission that diplomats must represent. Diplomats in the field have to be able to react to swiftly evolving events. As Canadian diplomat Pierre Guimond described democracy support activity in Prague in the 1980s:

Diplomats have to know where the governments want to go in terms of foreign policy and then the ambassador is responsible for delivering the policy. But it's impossible for people in the capital city to decide "you should do this and you should do that." The foreign ministry knows what we do because we report. It is result-based, not event-based. It's not because we've been to 36 demonstrations that anything will happen. We were there because something is happening. (cited in Velinger, 2007)

The "happening" determines the outcome, and its fate is in the hands of local reformers and activists with the legitimate support of democratic embassies, representing their citizens at home. Members of the diplomatic staff need to feel confidence in their abilities to decide on the ground how to proceed and to know they won't be contradicted by parallel messaging by another agency or by a lack of support back home.

- When complications ensue in bilateral relations, it is essential that diplomatic initiative in support of human rights defenders and democratic activists be welcomed and even rewarded by the career culture of foreign ministries. Even in the most difficult and circumscribed circumstances, there is much that a creative and committed diplomat can do, as the following pages will illustrate. This is the purpose of the Community of Democracies Palmer Prize, awarded to diplomats who "display valor under difficult circumstances and take risks or are especially inventive in their sustained efforts to assist civil society to advance democracy in their countries of assignment." Awards have been given

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to Czech, Dutch, American, Polish, Peruvian, Canadian, Swedish and other diplomats from the field in recent years.

- Time frames are unpredictable. On one hand, the impact of activity or demarches may not be apparent for some time. It takes consistent and sustained effort to contribute to building the self-confidence of civil society and to restraining repressive behaviour on the part of non-democratic authorities. Yet, in authoritarian societies, the gains of democracy can also come swiftly. Repressive regimes tend to implode from within. As Shari Villarosa, former US chargé d’affaires for Burma/Myanmar has said, “Living in any authoritarian country, while you’re in the midst of it, it’s hard to see that they’ll ever cede power or go away. But actually, they cause their own destruction. And their foundations are rotting. It’s a question of time” (cited in Watson, 2008).
- Lastly, as our case studies make clear, local conditions vary. Some authoritarian regimes are neuralgic about embassies connecting with civil society and a few are positively hostile about direct financial assistance, especially to advocacy groups, even from international civil society. Such host country authorities may try to confine the activity of diplomats to interaction only with designated official channels. They often aim to restrict interaction with local civil society by withholding official access for diplomats they consider straying from these narrow confines. In the longer run, these practices lead to international isolation for the authorities in question. There are international norms for ensuring diplomatic practice does not directly interfere with internal affairs, but there are also overriding obligations for governments to respect international norms with respect to human rights, and for democratic governments to persist in representation of these obligations, even though they may calibrate their practices differently to suit different locales.

## TOOL BOX RESOURCES AND ASSETS

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Diplomats can underestimate the potential impact that the inherent resources and assets at their disposal may contribute to the validation of the activities of civil society. The following are some of the resources and assets that diplomats can usually draw from. In the chapter and case studies that follow, the *Handbook* shows how these resources have been applied in practice.

### Immunity

*The unique asset of diplomatic immunity can be employed and virtually shared in ways that benefit individuals and groups pursuing democratic development goals and reform.*

*Nota bene:* While host countries cannot withdraw immunity, several have expelled diplomats for alleged interference in internal affairs. The excuse is often that

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they had supported specific political or partisan outcomes rather than democracy development in general. In lieu of expulsion, intimidation is also a recourse of authoritarian regimes, including against the families of diplomats.

*Examples:* There is an extensive record of democratic governments' diplomats preventing punitive state violence by their mere presence at the scene. In Kiev, in 2004, representatives of the French Embassy, the European Commission and the OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) arrived at the home of a youth leader as security forces were about to arrest him and other democratic activists present. Unaccustomed to witnesses they couldn't intimidate, the state security agents retreated. In Nepal in 2005, threatened dissidents were granted visas by resident embassies; diplomats of asylum countries accompanied them to the airport and to departure gates to block their seizure by authorities. In Cuba, diplomats from several EU countries and the United States have been appearing in person to support Las Damas de Blanco (Ladies in White), the wives of jailed prisoners of conscience who have been harassed and intimidated by groups mobilized by the regime.

There is also a record of harsh state counter-reaction to diplomats' on-the-ground intervention against repression. In Chile in 1973, diplomats from several democracies made their ways to the stadium and other locales where the military putschists had assembled arrested activists, many of whom were subsequently imprisoned, tortured or killed. The regime expelled the most prominent of the diplomats, Swedish Ambassador Harald Edelstam.

Expulsions of foreign representatives have since occurred under many repressive regimes, most recently in Sudan, Burma/Myanmar and Belarus, but the number of times that diplomats have deployed physical presence to discourage arbitrary repression of legitimate activity has increased to a larger degree, to considerable effect. Missions also have a record of using their immunity to provide asylum to democrats under threat, providing them shelter, as the US Embassy did for Chinese scientist and dissident Fang Lizhi, who spent almost a year there after the Tiananmen protests in 1989.

It often serves the purposes of repressive regimes to attribute peaceful civic protest to outside agitation from foreign countries, including their embassies, as the case studies on Egypt and Russia illustrate. Further, there is a long history of repressive governments warning individual diplomats that their activities threaten to compromise their immunity, and that expulsion could follow. Such warnings are often accompanied by the presentation of police photos of diplomats attending demonstrations or meeting activists, a technique apartheid-era South Africa copied from police states in Eastern Europe and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). To underscore the warning to diplomats that their immunity is tenuous, pressure sometimes extends to intimidation and even violence against family members. A more pernicious technique is the use of gangs of toughs to harass and intimidate diplomats by proxies, such as the disturbances created by Nashi, the

Kremlin-sponsored youth group against the UK ambassador in Moscow. Old habits of intimidation die hard, even if they seldom succeed.

More complex are cases of authoritarian regimes such as Cuba that withdraw diplomats’ normal access to local authorities when they are alleged to be supporting local opposition or reform activists and movements. But here, too, there are costs, as reciprocal access will be curtailed against the country’s own diplomats abroad. Most democratic embassies in Cuba have managed to sustain a supportive relationship with representatives of civil society, despite the state’s attitude.

Such efforts to intimidate and discourage outreach to civil society have usually been in vain over the long term and only serve to deepen diplomatic isolation. The consequences of reciprocal action curtailing the access and mobility of their own diplomats abroad, together with the costs in terms of the relationship’s benefits, are often enough for authorities to accept reasonable ground rules for diplomats’ access to civil society.

That being said, there is an emerging genre of isolated and internationally shunned dictatorial regimes indifferent to or disdainful of the benefits of diplomatic interchange altogether, to the costs of local society. Diplomats in Belarus and Zimbabwe, for example, have been working in such an atmosphere of withdrawal from international reality, as our case studies on those countries demonstrate. The actions of the government of Iran against diplomatic missions have been similarly harsh, from the time that the revolutionary regime authorized the occupation of the US Embassy and the holding hostage of diplomatic personnel in 1979. These actions show that there is a side to the government that is indifferent to costs to Iran internationally of such conduct. As our case studies on Cuba, Russia, Belarus and Zimbabwe illustrate, circles in the political and security apparatus show indifference to foreign public opinion, international norms or even to benefits that their people could derive from greater outside contact.

The practice of greater reliance on locally engaged employees extends to responsibility for contact with civil society and liaison work on the ground to support democracy development. The authorities in Iran actually placed local employees of the British Embassy on trial as surrogates for embassy officials who have immunity, in an attempt to discredit the 2009-2010 protests in the public mind. In such circumstances, diplomats are mindful of the need not to expose locally engaged colleagues or others to the risk of arbitrary retribution. Embassies have developed internal protocols and training to reduce the vulnerability of local non-diplomatic status personnel.

### **The Support of Home Authorities**

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*Unambiguous support from their own authorities in sending capitals provides diplomats with effective leverage, the ability to link benefits to behaviour, and in extremis, the opportunity to recommend the imposition of sanctions.*

*Nota bene:* Diplomatic relations are reciprocal. As benefits are a two-way street, linkage provides diplomats with leverage to work in favour of greater freedom

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of action for diplomats in support of civil society. Diplomats can urge their own capitals to facilitate or discourage access for visiting host country officials seeking potentially advantageous business or other partners, and home-state cooperation programs and connections. Diplomats also generate crucial support from home authorities when their own nationals come under attack abroad.

Once on an assignment, multi-tasked diplomats are often stressed under the burden of a variety of reporting and representational requirements. Reports indicate a tendency of senior managers to discourage ongoing democracy development activity in favour of more apparently immediate bureaucratic functions. This argues for clear and explicit corporate support from headquarters for human rights and democracy defence as core priorities of the country programs. The ultimate human rights officer should be the ambassador, even if specifically confrontational personal situations are avoided.

### Coup and Crisis Management

In his recollections of a working life spent in the British diplomatic service, Ambassador Sherard Cowper-Coles (2012) emphasizes a “truth about diplomacy: just as soldiers love a good fight (but can’t say so), so diplomats love a good crisis (but won’t admit it). In each case, it is what the profession is about.”

Many episodes requiring the support and even intervention of diplomats develop rapidly. Events in Egypt from 2011 through to the re-seizure of power by the military in July 2013 illustrate the complexity of communications and advice from the US and other embassies which become the local symbol of an outside country’s support or non-support in a volatile situation. It is essential that officers in the field be able to respond to the requirements without worrying that their actions will be second-guessed at headquarters, and their careers affected negatively. Otherwise, hesitant embassies may fail to oppose arbitrary uses of force by the government in time, or may fail to take action early enough to precipitate a coup against a legitimate government. Some democratic embassies in Moscow in September 1991 hesitated in this way to condemn the coup. This is a powerful argument for training foreign service officers in democracy support and human rights beforehand. Case study simulation is an increasingly frequent preparatory tool for diplomats.

The leaders of authoritarian states generally want international prestige and positive reception on international travel, not to mention business partnerships sought by industry and economic interests at home. This enables democratic embassies to condition their support for helping to arrange such media, political and business contacts on moderation of anti-democratic behaviour.

In cases when authorities try to intimidate diplomatic representatives, the support of home authorities is crucial. Canadian diplomats reacted to the South African foreign ministry’s warnings of expulsion in the 1980s by pointing out that the South African Embassy in Ottawa would suffer swift retaliation with a corresponding negative impact on South African economic and other interests.

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It is now apparent that in 2004, the warning by senior US diplomats that their government would freeze Ukrainian officials’ personal offshore assets in the event of the Ukraine government’s repression had considerably affected decision makers who might otherwise have ordered the use of force against demonstrators.

Sanctions can be a powerful weapon to moderate repressive behaviour, provided they have sufficiently widespread international support. If they are invoked out of general enmity, however, they can be counterproductive, enabling an authoritarian regime to claim a role of patriotic defence against outside interference. Even when regimes feign indifference, as Pinochet did when the United States cut off all but humanitarian aid to Chile in 1976, the international opprobrium of sanctions stings, as does the economic impact.

Selective targeting of responsible top officials’ personal offshore financial and other transactions, as well as those of their families, is increasingly used against anti-democratic regimes, such as in Zimbabwe, Burma/Myanmar and, in 2012, Russia. US Congress passed the Magnitsky Act as a measure against the Russian officials implicated in the death of auditor Sergei Magnitsky, who died in prison after presenting evidence of massive fraud by Russian tax officials. Diplomats on the ground advise home authorities on timing, targeting and potential impact of sanctions being considered. For example, the EU targeted sanctions of travel bans and asset freezes on 31 individuals in Belarus and 126 in Zimbabwe were developed in consultation with EU missions.

As pointed out earlier, though, it should be borne in mind that the threatened use of sanctions can sometimes be more influential in promoting behaviour modification than the finality of sanctions themselves. Sanctioning an unpopular regime can have the effect of punishing the most vulnerable in civil society, or curtailing exposure to international visitors and other beneficial contacts with the outside.

A cautionary note about “megaphone” diplomacy: Taking a public stand to denounce the clear abuse of rights of individuals, or suppression, is important. But if the motivation is more to cater to a domestic audience by publicly “bashing” an adversary, the effect on the ground can be negative, for embassies and democratic civil society allies alike. Private demarches to an authoritarian government and low-key media references can have more concrete outcomes. Diplomats may find they need to discourage home authorities from seeking to reap tempting domestic political dividends from threatening statements against unpopular regimes.

International solidarity is very pertinent, particularly since the impact of sanctions can be neutralized when there are offsetting flows of material support from non-democracies or opponents of sanctions, as in Zimbabwe, Burma/Myanmar or Belarus today. Iran receives reinforcement for repressive behaviour from its beneficial validation from, for example, Venezuela, which professes to be like-minded. In return, Iran has continued to support the beleaguered and internationally sanctioned Assad regime in Syria with weapons and financing.

When nationals who are human rights activists are threatened or arrested, the declaration of support for their situation can be crucial. As James Mawdsley, who

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was imprisoned in Burma/Myanmar for his human rights work, put it, there are “ways in which consular duties were more than consular.” He commented “If the FCO [Foreign and Commonwealth Office] had not said the same thing on the outside, I would have been beaten up. But the regime was too afraid to beat me up over issues where the FCO gave me backing.”

### **Influence**

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*In the new paradigm of public diplomacy, diplomats more consciously represent their whole society to the host society, beyond traditional government-to-government communication. The reputation of the society they represent and project locally, its experience, values and capacities to help are deployable assets. Democracies that have only recently emerged from repressive conditions themselves may have experience that has special relevance. The effect of public diplomacy is obviously reinforced where the sending country's institutions, achievements, governance and lifestyles have appeal locally, adding credibility through the force of example in dialogue with local authorities on democratic development — but not all democracies have comparable influence to bring to bear. The threat of suspending membership in multilateral organizations can also be invoked when necessary. Indeed, regional and transnational bodies follow a variety of plans and practices to encourage members in the effort to build democratic and transparent governance.*

*Examples:* Countries in transition tend to identify with the examples of those to which they can readily relate. On some mentoring issues, the best mentors can often be those of countries with recent comparable experience in democratization. As a Czech ambassador expressed his country's interest in democracy support, “We were grateful for the help we received from the West in the 1980s. So it should be a priority in our foreign policy to help.”

Polish Foreign Minister Radek Sikorski described how:

there is very little that we as outsiders can do to affect events, except to set a good example. We sponsored a multipart documentary in Arabic on the Polish democratic transition on Al Jazeera. We sent Lech Walesa to Tunisia to tell them how we did it. I was the first foreign minister in Benghazi, when Qaddafi was still fighting. And meeting with the then Provisional National Council made me realize that the challenges that these societies face are identical to what we in central Europe faced two decades ago. (*Foreign Affairs*, 2013)

Influence is also a function of international stature and impact. At least until popular unrest in the spring of 2013 tarnished its image, Turkey had become a prominent role model for many Arab reformers because of its apparent success in bridging religion and democracy and because of its economic performance. Much is made of the purported rivalry for influence of China and the United States. China's

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indifference to human rights standards in authoritarian countries may earn favour from such leaders, but the central fact of influence is more likely to be determined by the impact a major power can have on conditions in the country concerned.

It is no doubt true that economic or political difficulties at home can reduce the amount of influence a democracy can deploy abroad because its example is less appealing and because its attention to foreign opportunities is reduced. But great powers have multiple points of direct and indirect leverage.

The military handbook, *Military Engagement: Influencing Armed Forces Worldwide to Support Democratic Transitions* (Blair, 2013), outlines the ways in which close relations between uniformed personnel — that are built, among other reasons, as a result of training together — can build significant influence in times of crisis, when the military’s role can be crucial. A similar effect can be seen in relations of confidence between partners within the intelligence community.

The European Union’s requirement that applicants for membership fulfill the *acquis communautaire* of democratic and effective governance has had a profound influence on building what is an enlarging arc of stability and democracy across Europe.

Outside inducements to undertake a rigorous program of democratization and institution-building also emerge from conditionalities that are increasingly prominent features of multilateral and bilateral relationships. These exist on every continent, including standards of regional organizations, though there is often a yawning gap between theory and practice.

African peer pressure, the efforts of the African Union, and the best practices approach of the New Partnership for Africa’s Development, as well as positive governance conditions from international economic institutions, have had mixed effects on governance in Africa. To date, only a few African countries have followed up with the complete self-assessments of governance and action programs intended by the African Peer Review Mechanism. The role of civil society in governance remains unrecognized by African summits.

Progress toward greater democracy in Africa should, in principle, be reinforced by the obligations of membership in the Commonwealth of Nations and l’Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie, both of which state that the encouragement of democracy and human rights is at the core of their activity and purpose, as stated by the relevant Harare, Millbrook, and Bamako Declarations. However, enforcement can be soft and la Francophonie, in particular, tolerates dictatorships in its membership, such as the petro-dictatorship of Equatorial Guinea, ranked regularly by Freedom House as one of “the worst of the worst” for systematic human rights abuse.

The OAS supports democratic development in Latin America building deeper roots, although populist nationalism is evident in several countries. The OAS took a strong stand against what was labelled a military coup d’état in Honduras in 2009-2010.

Although some of its members, such as Vietnam, retain one-party non-democratic governance, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is at last making

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governance increasingly part of its mandate, as can be seen by its criticism of the regime in Burma/Myanmar before recent changes. Both Singapore and Malaysia have held multiparty elections. Australia's enhanced regional cooperation programs, via the Pacific Islands Forum, place governance development assistance at the centre of their mandate; both Australia and New Zealand have been strong players in efforts to encourage democratic outcomes in East Timor, the Solomon Islands and Fiji.

The central point here is that external support bolsters civil society in its efforts to construct democratic and effective governance in a suitable and organic fashion. This outward-looking aspiration provides diplomats geared to the merits of public diplomacy multiple opportunities. By choosing to showcase those aspects and features of their own democratic society which are most admired — for example, the way US diplomats can bond with the high esteem that the Lebanese hold for the quality of American post-secondary education — diplomats can at least help to compensate for any perception of policy differences between governments, or public resentment for foreign policy stands. The US Fulbright program and the EU's Erasmus Mundi constitute people-to-people tools, which have many counterparts elsewhere, and which can greatly improve the context within which US and European diplomatic representatives operate. But diplomats whose countries have themselves recently experienced winning and consolidating democratic reform may be able to bring special credibility to bear.

### **Funds**

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*Small amounts of post funding can be precious to start-up reform groups and NGOs. While most democracy development financial support is provided through NGOs and institutions, small-grant seed money for grassroots organizations from discretely administered and easily disbursed post funds can have swift direct positive effect. However, authoritarian governments have taken issue with the practice of direct embassy financial support to local civil society and have made it illegal. This calls for selective alternative strategies.*

*Examples:* In 2002, the Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs established its Transformation Policy Unit and Fund to enable Czech embassies to support democratization, human rights and transition-related projects in countries with repressive regimes. Most of these projects were deliberately small to enable disbursement directly to local civil society actors without the local government's scrutiny and involvement.

There are numerous examples of embassies being empowered in this way. Sweden provides its embassies funding specifically for democracy development support. In South Africa in the 1980s, the Canadian government created a large embassy-administered fund with a mandate for direct assistance to civil society, especially assistance to victims of apartheid. The advantage of having the embassy administer the fund directly drew from the perception that diplomatic representatives on the ground are, in liaison with international NGOs, best placed to identify suitable partners and beneficiaries. The funds helped groups to sustain essential activity

and often enabled small but identity-building successes, such as the distribution of T-shirts or publicity for civil society rallies, and funds were also dispersed in aid of legal support for human rights defenders.

Many embassies from democratic countries in Russia in the early 1990s also found that such small amounts they could disburse rapidly from post funds directly to soup kitchens, orphanages and women’s groups, among others, were clearly having a helpful humanitarian effect and contributing to the rudimentary beginnings of civil society at an especially disruptive time in the society. Diplomats report that such programs earned a degree of public credit often not available from the heavily funded, large-scale infrastructure programs that characterized transitional assistance in those years. In Ukraine in 2004, embassy funding requiring little, if any, paperwork was critical to the survival of youth groups such as Pora! that, despite a lack of much administrative capacity, were able to stand up for the integrity of Ukraine’s elections and for democracy itself at a decisive time.

There is, however, a downside in several countries where direct financing of advocacy groups is problematic. Obviously, diplomats have to be careful not to expose local members of civil society to the risk of political or even legal retribution. Some governments have made outside material support for advocacy or opposition groups a major issue. Most notoriously, Cuba has used embassy financial support as evidence to prosecute and convict activists. It is essential that foreign funding not be available to support specific political outcomes.

Russian authorities took exception to the role they allege that foreign foundation and embassy funds played in helping to finance the “colour” revolutions in Europe, which the Russians perceived as being against “their” candidates and interests. They charged that the funding overstepped the line by supporting specific partisan political outcomes, when, in fact, outside financing for political parties was at the margin. Its purpose was to support civil society’s right to free and fair elections, not to back specific contestants for power. Nonetheless, as the Russian case study describes, the “orange shock” caused deepened adversarial attitudes from Russian authorities toward Russian NGOs. Severe constraints placed on the operational mobility of international NGOs have been aggravated in 2012-2013, despite efforts by ex-President Medvedev to seek a positive modus vivendi.

Non-political organizations that constitute the foundations of civil society are often able still to benefit from well-intended embassy support. Even most repressive regimes still make a differentiation between development NGOs and advocacy groups. International NGOs often can fill the role of providing small amounts of funding, but they do not act as surrogates for embassies.

### **Solidarity**

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*Solidarity is a valued asset at all phases of democratic development. In democratic assistance programs among like-minded missions and international NGOs, solidarity multiplies impact and minimizes duplication. It also enhances political messaging through witnessing trials, joint demarches on human rights and other issues, and*

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*reduces the ability of authoritarian regimes to play the commercial interests of partners off against each other. Within civil society, NGOs and democratic reformers and activists value the solidarity of mentors with prior experience in democratic reform. Diplomats can assist in making the connections.*

*Examples:* Solidarity among diplomats has been especially important in support of human rights defenders and democratic activists on trial for their activities. This expression of solidarity conveys to the authorities that the conduct of such proceedings is indeed being monitored by democratic partners, and not only by the country which may be more specifically concerned if there is an issue of dual nationality or some other national tie to defendants. Prominent early examples include the trial of Nelson Mandela in 1963 and the trials of Václav Havel and other human rights activists in Prague in the 1980s, followed by many in recent years, such as Aung San Suu Kyi in Rangoon or Ayman Nour in Cairo.

Demonstrable gestures of solidarity are multiple and also include the appearance of working solidarity between democracies in the demonstration effort. French and US ambassadors attended vigils for murdered activists in Syria together and coordinated joint regional visits to cities where atrocities had taken place. Solidarity can also extend to the monitoring of prosecution of violence against human rights defenders, when its perpetrators are brought to trial because of international or other pressures — for example, the methodical attendance of resident EU diplomats at the trial of security personnel who had beaten Canadian-Iranian photojournalist Zahra Kazemi-Ahmadabadi to death in Tehran.

Solidarity in diplomatic representations through joint demarches can also multiply effectiveness. The virtually unprecedented prosecution and trial of locally engaged employees of the British Embassy in Tehran in 2009 has been met with a joint response from all EU missions. Forceful joint demarches have been called for when human rights come under stress in an allied country, such as the case in 2005 when the United States, the United Kingdom and Canada made a joint demarche to Afghan authorities against curbs on freedom of speech. Such representations have, however, been notoriously unsuccessful on several laws circumscribing the status of Afghan women.

Solidarity among donor democracies and with international NGOs has also been instrumental in avoiding duplication or errors of omission in democratic support programs. In Serbia in 2000, democracies and NGOs cooperated via a “donors’ forum,” which greatly increased the effectiveness and coverage of such assistance, a technique now in good use among democratic country embassies and NGOs in many locales.

The most effective form of solidarity among donors and democracy-supportive embassies is that which avoids competition and benefits from comparative advantage. As a Czech ambassador stated, “We learned how to plug in from the Dutch, the Norwegians and the US. We tried to find where we would have the most value added, and learned quickly that our democratic transition experience was that. So

we concentrated on transfer of know-how. Not everything is transferable, of course. But we still had a lot to offer. If they want, they can even learn from our mistakes.”

### Civil Society Solidarity Is the Most Effective Form of Outside Democracy Development Support

In the transitional countries of Europe, building up to and following the great changes of 1989, the mentoring of successive reformers contributed to the self-confidence and effectiveness of catalytic groups in civil society — Solidarnosc had close ties to Czechoslovak and Hungarian dissidents in the late 1980s; Slovakian reformers helped Croatians, Serbians and Ukrainians in 2000–2004; and the Serbian youth movement Otpor! aided Pora! in Ukraine in 2004. Many of these efforts were facilitated or channelled by diplomats from countries that had undergone the earlier reforms, a pattern which has been apparent in Latin America and now characterizes the foreign policies of many newer democracies in their relationships throughout the world. The very effective Indian civil society protest initiative “I paid a bribe,” with its astute use of social networks to expose petty corruption, has now locally generated initiatives in Kenya and Ukraine.

### Legitimacy

*Many democratic activists would agree with Francis Fukuyama (2004) that “in today’s world, the only serious form of legitimacy is democracy.” Diplomats themselves are personifications of the principle advanced by “Independent Diplomat” Carne Ross (2012) that “diplomacy’s prerequisite is not sovereignty but authority.” They bring to bear the authority of the state they represent, its influence and the legitimacy of its concern for those seeking to exercise rights considered to be universal.*

*Diplomats can draw for support from a variety of basic international agreements. Prominent examples include the UN Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders. These put forward the international norms that diplomats of democratic countries can legitimately claim to represent. Repressive jurisdictions may well maintain that such texts are not internationally binding on non-signatories and that outside support for democracy development and civil society amounts to interference in internal sovereign matters by foreign representatives, but international norms on human rights are increasingly conditioning behaviour and limiting the number of countries that insist on the primacy of national sovereignty, in part because specially mandated regional and other transnational authorities monitor performance.*

*Examples:* Even authoritarian non-democracies go to elaborate lengths to buttress their claim to legitimacy through recourse to superficial facets of democratic practice: rigged elections and the shameless and profligate use of the word “democratic” to describe republics that are anything *but* democratic. On one hand, the affirmation of democratic belief provides considerable leverage to democratic governments to

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try to persuade such governments to open up more to their own civil society in reality; on the other hand, repressive governments' protestations that the support of democratic embassies and NGOs to civil society is illegitimate runs counter to such an affirmation. But these objections themselves counter a wide body of international and regional agreements calling for open democratic governance. The UN Secretary-General's Special Representatives on Human Rights, and on Torture, the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders in Africa, the African Union itself, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, the Charter of Paris for the OSCE, or Commonwealth of Nations, and la Francophonie charters can all be pointed to by democratic diplomatic representatives for validation of the legitimacy of their own efforts at democracy development support.

Regional agreements have been effective in conditioning the behaviour of some countries, although regimes that remain resistant to outside opinion, such as Uzbekistan, Zimbabwe, Syria or North Korea, are unlikely to be influenced. The most prominent example of an effective regional agreement is the CSCE Helsinki Accords, which provided the benchmark textual references in the 1980s for Charter 77 in Czechoslovakia, for the Sakharov-Bonner campaign in the USSR, and for freeing up information and expression generally. These agreements were effective because they had been signed by the states in question and provided a platform for citizens to confront them about the contradiction between word and deed.

A potentially similar example is Cuba's signature, in 2008, of the UN Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which guarantees the rights to self-determination of citizens, their peaceful assembly, freedom of worship and freedom to leave the country. The signature alone provides diplomats with a commitment to point to in discussion of human rights with Cuban authorities.

## **FIFTEEN WAYS THAT DIPLOMATS HAVE MADE A DIFFERENCE**

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In putting their assets to work on behalf of supporting civil society's democrats and human rights defenders, diplomats draw from a tool box of activities and techniques. The tools described below are potentially powerful, especially when deployed using the proactive and public outreach approach that is the hallmark of modern democratic diplomacy.

Arranged in escalating sequence from more conventional diplomatic activities to more interventionist action, these tools offer diplomats the potential to develop and refine specific professional skill sets in democracy development support. These skills are also integrally related to skills needed for work in support of economic and social development, as well as human security. Democracy, after all, does not sit astride a hierarchy of needs: economic development, human security and human rights are interdependent and equally important to the human condition.

Nor do diplomats themselves sit astride the international community. Just as a vibrant civil society represents the essential foundation of democratic development, so international civil society accounts for much of the content of public-to-public relations today. In this respect, diplomacy is a complement and conduit for broader currents of international democracy development assistance that are occurring continuously.

### **The Golden Rules**

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#### Listening, Respecting and Understanding

*All diplomats make it their task to try to grasp the culture, psychology and situation of their countries of accreditation. Sir Sherard Cowper-Coles (2012), who had successive assignments as Ambassador to Israel and Saudi-Arabia, “underlined the importance for a diplomat of showing both understanding and affection for the country to which he is accredited. Only then does the diplomat have a chance of making a difference. If he doesn’t see the good — however limited — in his host country, he has little to work with.” When diplomats include local NGOs and groups on their initial rounds of calls on taking up their postings, it gives a boost to civil society. This is especially true for the introductory calls by incoming heads of missions. It should be mandatory at the outset to seek advice from local civil society on how best to support their efforts. Respecting and understanding the different roles and interests of all partners in the democratic development process is a basic requirement for productive relationships and successful support. Outsiders also have to understand and respect the ways in which the local reform process needs to take account of traditional values: social and political practices common in one country can be abrasive in another.*

*Nota bene:* Overall, the first maxim of “respecting” is to listen — ideally, in the language of the country. Deference to local culture is essential whenever possible. This includes the need for diplomats to recognize the risks and sacrifices incurred by democratic activists that protest authoritarian regimes, as well as the challenges reformers face in actually running for political office in semi-authoritarian settings. Dissidents need to make and offer the judgment whether contact with diplomats is protective and helpful, or whether it is untimely and risky. But their judgment should prevail.

*Such as:* Diplomats should also defer to the different and often primary roles played by international NGOs in local activity. Local NGOs should be respected. There were demonstrable lifts to civil society groups when newly arrived US Ambassador Harry Barnes made introductory calls to them at the same time as calling on officials of the Pinochet regime in Chile. Since then, connecting ambassadors and high-level visitors to civil society in countries where human rights are under stress has become almost routine. The high-level meetings of the EU and US in Russia, for example, now always include consultations with Russian NGOs. Norway’s foreign service

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has been a leader in reaching out to NGOs. Vidar Helgeson, who was Norwegian Secretary of State before becoming Secretary-General of the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA), has described Norway's approach as being "intensely interested in everything below the radar."

International NGOs are frequently closer to the ground than diplomats and often better able to pursue productive working partnerships with civil society. Diplomats need to know when to seek partnerships with them and when to recognize that the integrity of NGO work also needs distance from government connections, even when government programs in capitals provide project funding.

It should always be recognized that in repressive situations, democratic activists need space and often discretion. A Czech ambassador confides that countries which have themselves "experienced life under a repressive regime are often best placed to understand the situation of dissidents having to face their families and friends' vulnerability to reprisal — loss of job, imprisonment, worse — for their anti-regime activity." In Iran, a recent campaign by women's groups to obtain a million signatures from Iranian women on a petition to improve the status of women would have had its credibility undermined if opponents could show evidence of support from outside. On occasion, democratic activists, human rights defenders and reformers in Iran, Cuba or elsewhere have sent the message that they needed for a time to pursue their work without outside support.

Whatever the country, its preoccupations and identity issues are functions of its unique history and current conditions for ordinary people, and diplomats need to show sensitivity to them. In many traditional societies, local values can collide with the practices or aspirations of outsiders.

As political activities in most Western democracies are generally secular, Western analysts misunderstood the extent to which religious conviction needed to find reflection in democratic institutions in Egypt and Tunisia. In the most traditional Islamic societies, it has been necessary to respect the strength of tradition in supporting democratic transition on essential but challenging issues such as gender equality. A decade ago in Yemen, US Ambassador Barbara Bodine was able to support expanded women's rights without creating local traditionalist backlash by deferring to the need of local groups to build their bridges to others. By 2013, women were an important force in the post-Saleh constitutional convention discussions.

In Afghanistan, donor democracies have been keen to emphasize to publics back home the priorities of publicly valued issues such as girls' schooling, immunization and fighting corruption and drugs, while most Afghans were more concerned with jobs and the local availability of electricity. In 2009, the signing into law of provisions reducing the status of women in accordance with sharia law (in order to obtain electoral support from certain tribal areas) presented a real dilemma for countries attempting to build support at home for the costly efforts to help achieve democratic Afghan governance. The essence of "democratic diplomacy," then, has to be to find a middle ground respecting traditional values while enabling public support back home for the overall democratic and inclusive direction.

Chief EU diplomat Pierre Vimont acknowledges the problems that have arisen from the tendencies diplomats have had from being an inherently “conservative profession,” leading to an over-investment in the status quo and failure to see the warning signs of a popular drive for change. Carne Ross (2012) writes that this “inherited tradition” assigns a “hierarchy of priorities where security...ranks at the top, followed by economic interests....In recent years, it has become fashionable for the exponents of foreign policy to talk about ‘values’ as important in diplomacy — things like democracy and human rights. But in truth the underlying calculus remains little changed, as does the diplomatic mindset.”

Writing of the failure of the UK Foreign Office to foresee the Iranian revolution of 1979, Sir Sherard Cowper-Boles (2012: 52) cites an internal Foreign and Commonwealth Office inquiry which “concluded that the Embassy in Iran had been too preoccupied with selling tanks and tractors to the shah to notice what was happening in the bazaars of South Tehran.” But Cowper-Boles adds that the comment, made by the UK Ambassador in Tehran at the time, Sir Anthony Parsons (later Ambassador to the United Nations), “was probably closer to the mark: ‘our failure to foresee the fall of the Shah was [Parsons wrote], due not to a failure of intelligence or information, but to a failure of imagination. We simply could not conceive of Iran without the Shah.’ Just as later we found it difficult to imagine Egypt without Mubarak, or Libya without Quadafi” (ibid.).

The errors of the diplomatic mindset also became vividly apparent when the Arab Spring came as such a surprise to Western analysts and authorities. It is equally important now that they display the patience that is consonant with the need for time to build effective democratic governance.

### Sharing

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*Solidarity among democracies multiplies effectiveness. Like-minded embassies and engaged international NGOs need to share information and practice project coordination and team play in order to optimize beneficial impacts. Cooperation on democracy development support between democracies of the global “North” and “South” is still at an early stage, but can be especially effective. Monitoring elections is frequently done as a shared diplomatic project. All these efforts are most effective when local partners are also a prominent part of the sharing process and are able to assume responsible local “buy-in.” Diplomats in the field can become “cohering agents” of support programs combining democracy and development.*

*Nota bene:* It is generally easier to organize informal cooperation in the field than among capitals, especially among representatives of like-minded countries. Informal cooperation often also includes international NGOs, which are well placed to provide a wider and more authentic picture of grassroots and technical activity to promote democracy development. An emphasis on “sharing,” however, must respect the differences in role between embassies and NGOs. As embassies diversify activity in democracy assistance, diplomats need to defer to the prior, primary and often locally preferred engagements of NGOs in the field.

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*Such as:* Missions regularly compare analyses of country situations, specifically regarding human rights in countries such as China, where the issues are complicated and evolving, making assessments difficult. In repressive situations such as in Burma/Myanmar until recent developments, some democratic embassies worked closely together to exchange information and coordinate strategies, and then regularly met with a broader group of democratic embassies from the region.

The central point is that there should not be a competition among like-minded democratic missions, resident and non-resident, as described by a Czech ambassador in the earlier section on solidarity. The best outcomes are when missions work within informal “affinity groups,” permitting some to defer to work already ongoing or to specifically advantageous roles of others, or even to compensate for the handicaps of others due to difficulties in their bilateral relations.

Diplomatic representatives share duties to monitor and verify functions, such as court dates and trials of democracy activists or scholars, or when possible, to cover such events in force, highlighting the international political stakes for repressive regimes. The practice has been extensive, from South Africa in the 1960s to selective use as appropriate in Burma/Myanmar, Iran, Russia and Venezuela, though in recent trials of prisoners of conscience in China and Iran, diplomats have been excluded from witnessing the legal proceedings.

Joint demarches are also de rigeur on human rights and democratic transparency. Sometimes, because of specific and long-standing issues in bilateral relations, particular embassies and governments are more “radioactive” than others. This may leave more room for the less controversial to sustain contact and protection. A differentiation of roles that best enables particular countries to play to comparative strengths, credibility and experience is very useful, without suggesting that such activity is a surrogate for the interests of others.

In Burma/Myanmar, some European democratic representatives plugged into other countries’ programs that were already running, such as the Netherlands’ “foreign policy training” seminars in the region for young refugees from Burmese ethnic groups. Some missions enjoy or have connections to cultural facilities, which they share with other embassies, or make available to non-resident diplomats on a visit, as the French cultural organization the Alliance Française has done in Burma/Myanmar.

Sharing information locally on development issues, including on governance support activity, is becoming recognized as essential to avoid duplication or omissions, and increasingly includes international NGOs and multilateral agencies active in the country. In rapidly developing crises, democratic embassies and international NGOs have often set up informal coordinating and clearing house groups for fast disbursement of aid to local civil society and the electoral process, such as the “Donors Group” in Belgrade in 2000.

It is most productive when democratic host governments are themselves dynamic partners in the process — though not when more authoritarian regimes insist on

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controlling all development funding, as in Nepal when NGO funds had to be channelled through the Queen.

Bangladesh’s Local Consultative Group plenary brought together 32 Bangladesh-based representatives of donor missions and multilateral agencies with key local officials. Supplementary groupings such as the Like-minded Donor Group comprised local representatives of Canada, Denmark, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden. These groups work in turn with groups of NGOs, such as the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee or the Association for Development Agencies, which have track records of enhancing the democratic input by civil society into the development process. The process can go beyond coordination into joint programming: in Ghana, with the support of a government and civil society seeking governance development assistance, like-minded donor countries (Canada, Denmark, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom) have created a collaborative US\$8 million program, the Ghana Research and Advocacy Program.

There has been, of course, a contrary narrative of inadequate donor coordination, particularly in circumstances of post-conflict reconstruction where the aid flows are very substantial and usually urgent. In Bosnia-Herzegovina, the international tendency was initially toward too much humanitarian assistance, not always strategically coordinated, but insufficient development assistance. There was also inadequate coordination of planning and operations for development and security. Later, in Afghanistan, the aid effort began in 2001 with an unprecedented degree of donor coordination that enabled an overall development strategy. But in subsequent years, it fell much more to diplomats, aid officials and the military of individual missions to try to ensure coordination and effectiveness on the ground. “Coordinating groups” proliferated with only mixed results as far as international coordination is concerned, though UN and NATO representatives are working now to encourage the integration of democracy support, development and defence in a coordinated way. The US Agency for International Development (USAID), for example, launched Making All Voices Count, a cooperative program with British and Swedish development assistance authorities and the Omidyan Network to support inclusive governance and development, especially in new democracies in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.

An extremely important potential development is an exercise in South-North sharing of experience and cooperation which also bridges government and civil society: The Open Government Partnership is an extension of bilateral cooperation between Brazil and the United States to work together to support inclusive development in new democracies. Founding members of the intergovernmental organization are Brazil, Indonesia, Mexico, Norway, the Philippines, South Africa, the United Kingdom and the United States. They are joined by leading civil society representatives from Brazil (Instituto de Estudos Socioeconomicos), India (Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan), Kenya (African Centre for Open Governance), Mexico (Instituto Mexicano para la Competitividad), and Tanzania (Twaweza). There are now almost 50 participating countries from the South and North. The commitments

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and goals include fiscal transparency, training of officials, access to information and citizen participation.

### **Truth in Communications**

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#### **Reporting**

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*Confidential assessment to home authorities is at the centre of the diplomat's traditional role. Missions' regular assessments — of the local situation, capacity, and psychological, political or even cultural constraints — on the likelihood of a democratic process emerging or being successfully sustained can help develop a template approach to benchmarks and norms that will assist in comparisons and common evaluations by NGOs and centres of excellence. Accurate reporting of human rights situations forms the basis for international scrutiny and helps to determine whether to initiate official intervention.*

*Nota bene:* Reporting must be demonstrably comprehensive and balanced in its sourcing. Diplomatic professionals always heed the caution that their confidential and value-added reporting of circumstances and conditions in the host country should draw from a wide range of contacts in the society and avoids excessive deference to official sources or to overarching security or other bilateral interests.

*Such as:* The “township attachés” at the British Embassy in early-1990s South Africa are an early example of the need to get out of the capital. There are multiple examples of regular human rights reporting, since this is a core vocation of diplomatic representation, made virtually mandatory by the various national and international human rights monitoring requirements.

In high profile and relatively open crisis situations, mission reporting competes with international media, but because of the extensive reductions in foreign coverage, media correspondents today are often “fly-in/fly-out” non-experts who have to rely on diplomats, NGOs and “fixers” to obtain context or important background. There are frequently situations, such as in Zimbabwe or Iran, where international media have been basically expelled.

The responsibility of missions to report the conditions and prospects for change is enhanced, though rendered more difficult by a regime very suspicious of contacts between citizens and foreign representatives. In Zimbabwe, diplomats, including ambassadors, have undertaken fact-finding missions in the countryside to document the beatings and intimidation of Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) supporters, which Zimbabwe security personnel have tried ineffectively to block. We know from Wikileaks of the excruciatingly accurate portrayals of personal excess and offensive official entitlement that have been reported by US diplomats on post in authoritarian situations such as Tunisia and Uzbekistan.

Many examples of misleading diplomatic reporting exist. Some situations are potentially so unprecedented in the experience of observers that there is a tendency

of diplomatic representatives empathetic toward the country to “look away from the dark signs,” as occurred in the build-up to unimaginable atrocity in Rwanda in 1994.

A failure to do people-level reporting has led to persistent and damaging misreadings of the public mood, assumptions of assured continuity in power, and missing the signs of impending ethnic or communal conflict. Some authoritarian regimes have objected to having a strategic ally contact their domestic opposition, or even reporting confidential adversary political analysis back home, a condition that constrained US official reporting on Iran in the 1970s, leading to an underestimation of the public groundswell for reform. A form of over-deference to the need for restraint has caused some countries to speak about the “participation” of Saudi Arabians in a political process, rather than speaking about democracy itself.

Conversely, home country headquarters can themselves become overly reliant on their leaders’ relationships with specific authoritarian leaders, and may discourage or ignore diplomatic reporting that is critical of a given regime, as happened in the past in Pakistan, Egypt and Indonesia, among many examples. EU representatives in Ethiopia in 2005 repeatedly warned authorities in Brussels that “basic human rights abuses are being committed by the government on a daily basis,” and that “the EU must respond firmly and resolutely” — but nothing happened (Barr, 2011).

### Informing

*In circumstances where the host state attempts to interrupt or circumscribe access to information, providing the public with pertinent objective information is a public service of open diplomacy. Supporting the emergence of local independent media, which is an essential companion of democratic governance, is a valued contribution by democracies, as is assisting the development of objective public broadcasting in transitional and emerging democracies. From outside, several international support programs exist to enable Internet users in countries shutting down local networks and sites to access alternative servers beyond the regime’s control.*

*Nota bene:* The existence of a healthy independent local media sector is an essential component of democratic governance. Independent media support has, in consequence, become a basic tool of public diplomacy. The value of independent media outlets is commonly associated with enabling a plurality of voices, including responsible political opposition. From both developmental and governance points of view, the existence of sustainable, independent media able to monitor and advocate the quality of governance is an under-recognized but essential audit asset, in both developing and developed democracies.

*Such as:* In the absence of free information, the regular communication of news bulletins and information by missions have been used to help fill gaps and correct the record on international or other matters, especially as authoritarian regimes are apt to expel foreign correspondents who criticize them. Today’s embassies use websites to communicate to a much larger audience than printed communication had permitted in the past, and manage to prompt an interactive conversation with the local readership.

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Preserving access to the Internet is now a central interest of democracies. International cooperative software programs can now be downloaded by Internet users to enable access to international news outlets such as BBC World Service, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Radio-France and Al-Jazeera in societies where broadcast or online transmissions are jammed in crisis situations. In such circumstances, diplomats can also serve as witnesses of events and developments otherwise hidden from international view through interviews with international outlets. These reports frequently find their way back to the closed society itself by being picked up by local language border services, as exist among the Burmese refugee communities clustered over the border with Thailand.

Defending journalists in support of such organizations as Reporters Without Borders, PEN International and various national NGOs is an important part of human rights defence. Iran and China lead the world for imprisonment of journalists reporting factual stories of journalistic merit, a practice that stands in the way of normal relations with societies that enjoy freedom of the press. Canada's leading media development organization, Journalists for Human Rights, has mentoring programs in techniques of reporting local issues in the interest of transparency specifically for journalists "covering city hall."

The merits of adversarial broadcasting from outside vary. Essentially, adversarial broadcasts, such as those sponsored and funded by the US government in Cuba in past years tend to be discounted as propaganda. When they emphasize, instead, objectively presented news and non-political magazine content, such as the Farsi language reporting of BBC World Service (that is feared by authorities because of its credibility), they can be very effective in enabling a fact-based counter-story to regime propaganda.

A very noteworthy initiative is the satellite TV service Belsat, founded by Agnieszka Romaszewska-Guzy, and supported financially by the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Since December 2007, Belsat, in collaboration with Polish public TV Telewizja Polska, and drawing from a large network of news contributors in Belarus, has transmitted programming and objective news from transmitters in Poland.

In Africa, radio is a more widespread information medium than the Internet. In 2012, the US Information Agency produced a dedicated radio information service for Northern Mali when it was under occupation by rebels. Increasingly, information platforms are being re-profiled to reach hand-held communications devices, which are becoming the dominant technology in Africa.

The US Department of State's Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations (CSO) has supported the efforts of the Syrian Opposition Coalition to provide Syrians with real-time broadcasting, not from outside the country, but from inside. Broadcasting professionals mentor Syrian personnel in broadcasting techniques, and the support program provides equipment such as small hand-held transmitters. Residents of Syria's major population centres can tune into programming that covers topics such as the role of women in leadership and the psychological impact

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of war on Syrian children. The reporters associated with the Free Syria broadcast services are accredited alongside national and international media at all opposition news events. The program will help to assure a reliable public information network during a political transition.

The mentality of repressive regimes emerges clearly from the indictments presented by the public prosecutor of Tehran against Iranian citizens in a 2009 show trial. Those indicted were variously accused of having colluded with Western governments, foundations and individuals in “exposing cases of violations of human rights,” training reporters in “gathering information” and “presenting full information on the 2009 electoral candidates.” The charges suggest that Iranian citizens are meant to believe that abusing human rights and repressing information, including on candidates for public office, are all in the national interest.

Helping start-up independent media outlets has been an increasing activity in democratic development support and there are many examples of such support, especially in transitional situations, such as *Ukrainska Pravda*, Croatia’s 1990s *Feral Tribune*, or *Sud* in Senegal. In Senegal in 1985, a journalist-editor sought start-up funding for a desktop-published newspaper. The US Embassy put him in contact with the Ford Foundation and within months, the daily newspaper *Sud* was on its way to its current position as a preeminent daily newspaper at the centre of a conglomerate, Sud Communication. As a diplomat there at the time observed, “Through its reporting, it has made government more transparent and opened new channels for political dialogue, thereby bolstering Senegal’s political system.” The successful transition from the regime of President Abdoulaye Wade relied on relatively free reporting in Senegalese media.

The Portuguese Embassy in Moscow gave seed funding to a fledgling private radio station that became the flagship of a communications “empire.” In Algeria, democratic governments contributed to such start-ups, but at the same time supported the improvement and expansion of standards and coverage on the part of state press and broadcasting.

In recent years, missions have supported bloggers and websites such as StopTheBribes.net in Nigeria (built with help from the Canadian High Commission), which enables mobile phone users to immediately report police misbehaviour, among other things.

In Honduras, an effort to combat corruption and improve accountability relies on improvements in transparency. The US CSO has helped the Honduras Security Tax Commission to build a website enabling the public to track spending of tax revenues as a pilot project to lay the foundation for broader transparency effort and create the habit of greater governmental accountability.

Multiple international programs exist to support the upgrade of journalistic norms, through workshop and mentoring programs that emphasize the need to report all sides to a story, and to counter hostile and inflammatory rhetoric. Diplomatic officers scout for candidates for individual journalist support programs that are particularly suited to the circumstances of the country. The US Department of State’s Hubert

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H. Humphrey Fellowship Program includes journalists in its fellowships for future African leaders, picked by US diplomatic personnel on the ground. In Colombia, the UK Embassy proposed safety training for journalists and a training program to help them report more effectively on specific issues there, such as child abuse. In some societies with severe limitations on the press, Czech embassies have provided non-political courses in basic film and media training, including how to write an article, work with a camera and edit. These skills were vital in covering 2007's abortive "Saffron Revolution" in Burma/Myanmar.

In post-authoritarian circumstances, state broadcasters, in particular, benefit from outside journalistic training. In South Africa, a consortium of public broadcasters from Australia, the United Kingdom and Canada aided the conversion of radio and television from being instruments of state propaganda into responsible news and information agencies. In all these transitional circumstances, diplomatic missions have useful contributions to make by providing access to content, as well as to training.

Helping to use the visits of foreign democratic leaders and their in-country press events is also useful. For example, in Algiers, the robust exchanges between visiting political leaders and their accompanying press corps had an exemplary effect on the normally passive local journalists witnessing the journalistic give-and-take of the visitors.

In circumstances where communications are blocked or where services are prohibitively expensive, embassy and consular information offices, libraries and cultural centres provide precious connections to the outside world. The American Cultural Center in Rangoon was a survivor of the sorts of information outlets the United States maintained decades ago and, during the harsh periods of the regime's crackdown, played a vital role in making books, DVDs, Internet connections, seminars and English lessons available to an avidly interested population. Other embassies in Rangoon were also able to provide Internet access to those who are willing to expose themselves to security scrutiny from Burmese police. In the absence of journalists, certain democratic missions — Australia, the United States, the United Kingdom and others — were able to report publicly to international news outlets what they were able to witness, and these reports were then played back to the Burmese, especially via exile news organizations, often in frontier areas, where the state was not able to block incoming transmissions entirely. When all foreign news correspondents were expelled from Burma/Myanmar in 2007-2008, UK Ambassador Mark Canning objectively described to outside journalists the "fearful and angry" mood of the population, and provided analysis of the regime's probable intentions. His words found their way back to the Burmese public.

### Working with the Government

#### Advising

*In transitional situations, working with local authorities and civil society in support of their capacity for effective and transparent democratic governance is a core vocation of most diplomatic missions and diplomats from Community of Democracies member states. Clearly, it is easier for democracies to work as partners with governments already in the process of transition, but engaging with still-authoritarian regimes on joint interests can often build confidence that permits advice and representation on governance and human rights issues a better hearing.*

*Nota bene:* Considerable experience has now been accumulated concerning advice to governments managing democratic transitions, especially in Europe post-1989 and in Africa. Initially, strong emphasis was placed on economic governance. Advice was, as the Russian case study underlines, often inappropriate to the circumstances and capacities at the time, leading to the oversimplification and underestimation of the problems of lack of capacity. Increasing attention has since been paid to reforms aimed at improving the machinery of governance and public oversight, and deepening democratic accountability, as well as advising how to encode human rights, legislative and electoral practices, and the role of civil society. Diplomatic representatives have even been able to advise on areas believed to be culturally sensitive by situating the advice carefully, such as the work of many diplomats in counselling on the expansion of the rights of women, and on inclusive pluralism, the rights of refugees or indigenous peoples.

*Such as:* The body of best practices over the years comprises a substantial record of different techniques. Often, regional programs to improve democratic governance have a special resonance as they draw more directly from the experiences of nearby countries that have recently passed through roughly similar phases of democratic development. Diplomatic representatives who were part of that experience have a special credibility and role to play. Whatever the democracy providing advice, it must be made clear to government authorities that outsiders are not taking political sides.

Blair’s (2013) military handbook outlines the experience of uniformed personnel from democracies advising counterparts in the “deep state” of military and security departments of government on issues of democratic governance, emphasizing the obligations military officers usually share to defend the people. Enhancing civilian control of the military is a function of supporting the enhancement of civilian capacity and advising the military.

Some advice is transferable from direct analogous experience, such as the role of Mauritius in advising neighbouring countries such as Tunisia in the organization of elections. Chile counselled South African authorities on the establishment of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission, a technique central to closure to the trauma of conflict that has been used in adapted forms elsewhere, such as Rwanda. As

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Gillian Slovo, South African writer and human rights activist has noted, there will be some more interested in truth than in reconciliation, but the interplay of justice and coming to terms with the past to permit going forward follows similar patterns in different post-authoritarian and post-conflict societies. A model question on preparation material for the 2013 French baccalaureate exam in philosophy asked responders to weigh whether “peace” is more important to assure than “truth.” Truth and reconciliation experience can be usefully interdependent but benefit from taking others’ experience into account.

There is also a long record of ineffective or counterproductive advice, often stemming from an overreliance on outside consultants with little experience with working conditions in the consumer country. The founder of a Russian bank recalls asking outside financial consultants sent by an international financial institution to leave his premises on the grounds their advice was hewn entirely from optimum conditions available in Western financial centres, but not in Moscow. He agreed to invite them back only if they first observed how local employees needed to relate to local conditions and capacities, and then tried themselves to function in the local circumstances before attempting to work together to upgrade the operation. It is up to donor missions to make the point that there may be an overreliance on expensive outside consultants with little familiarity with local culture and practice, and to propose experts with more relevant expertise. Patrice McMahon and Jon Western (2009) cite another example, through the words of a Bosnian NGO officer: “Bosnians have come to understand the bargain well. Westerners came with money and ideas, wanting to do good. In the end, we waste their money and they waste our time.”

As this *Handbook* stresses, strategic partnerships with some authoritarian regimes are essential to international peace and security, and to national interests of the democracy concerned. As the current US administration points out, engagement can enhance the prospects for communicating key points about governance and transparency, and for legitimizing the space occupied by civil society. The key to credibility is consistency.

### Dialoguing

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*Diplomats on the ground take part in, and supplement, regularly scheduled government-to-government human rights and democracy discussion. The aim is to ensure that democracy development and respect for human rights are maintained in balance near the centre of the relationship, and that host authorities accept that cooperation programs are conditional on positive trends of governance. Such regular discussion can also aim to legitimize democracy development support work undertaken by missions in collaboration with local civil society. The promotion of dialogue processes to promote common ground in divided societies is a strong emphasis of international organizations such as the International IDEA, which has undertaken several participatory dialogue exercises in support of positive change in countries such as Guatemala, Mauritania and Nepal.*

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*Nota bene:* It is important that such government-to-government discussions be held regularly. They need to cover the “end-state” aims in democracy development and not be confined to specific and sporadic human rights violations or outrages. In order to avoid the “fig leaf” effect of going through the motions for the sake of appearances, discussants should, ideally, not be limited to host country diplomatic authorities, but also include authoritative representatives of “power ministries,” as well as having the in-country support of security agencies of both sides. It is essential that the dialogue not be degraded into just a process at the expense of substance.

*Such as:* Many Community of Democracies members undertake human rights dialogues with partners under bilateral agreements such as the EU “structural dialogues” or its monitoring obligations under the “essential human rights clause” of the Cotonou Agreement with African, Caribbean and Pacific area partners.

Several of China’s partners maintain human rights dialogues with Chinese authorities. The European Union and the United Kingdom have urged China to ratify the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and have discussed how China might meet the requirements of articles 6 (death penalty), 9 (arbitrary arrest and punishment), and 14 (right to a fair trial). There is interest among NGOs to see China being held to fulfill Article 19 on freedom of information.

While any dialogue is better than none, the dialogues should always aim for some results on the broader picture of democratic governance; the risk is that reluctant regimes will only go through the motions and maintain the status quo in practical terms, and even pretend the dialogue confers a seal of approval. Or self-confident countries feeling the pressure may simply refuse to hold human rights dialogues, as was the case of Iran with the European Union. Russia holds dialogues on human rights, but only outside of Russia.

Dialogues should not skirt issues embarrassing to the partner, such as corruption. Critical comment by international NGOs such as Transparency International or the International League for Human Rights deserves validation in human rights dialogues by democratic governments.

It is normal that degrees of disunity of purpose may emerge within the governments of transforming countries, between hardline authoritarians and more outward-looking officials. Hardliners who resist change are reinforced and emboldened if a parallel competition of purpose is discernible by representatives of democratic countries who are protecting special interests, such as occurred in the conduct of relations with Gadhafi’s Libya.

Human rights dialogues are without practical effect if the intelligence and security agencies of a repressive regime are absent from discussion of human rights, or worse, can claim the authority of ongoing privileged relationships with the security agencies of the sending democracy. Such a human rights and justice dialogue, undertaken by US Ambassador Marilyn McAfee in Guatemala in 1994, was undermined by a parallel relationship of privilege and confidence between intelligence agencies. In general, the principle of “do no harm” has to be overriding in bilateral relationships across the board. Dictators rely on the decisive support of their security services for

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their continued rule and very survival. Getting these to the point where they will not open fire on peaceful demonstrations for human rights is often the key moment in a transition. Military attachés and intelligence officers within embassies can be central assets in the diplomacy of democracy.

Dialogues on human rights and democratic governance reinforce subsequent bilateral demarches by diplomatic representatives on specific cases, as discussed below. They can also serve as the place to establish the legitimacy both of diplomatic contacts with civil society and indirectly to validate certain activities of civil society without implying that the civil society groups are acting on anything other than their own domestic behalf.

Ultimately, of course, repressive regimes prefer to present decisions to moderate behaviour as being taken in their own interest and not as a result of outside pressure, though outside benefits resulting from positive change can be useful to cite publicly as supportive validation of the regime's decision. Dialoguing democracies should always publicly defer to that preference, while privately keeping up the pressure.

Civic dialogue is also an increasingly used technique for promoting common ground solutions in divided societies or situations with challenging problems, where debate can often lead to divisive position-taking. In 2004, for example, International IDEA commissioned wide-ranging and broadly inclusive citizens' surveys in Nepal to determine their conceptions of good governance, democracy and human security at a time of constitutional stress. The survey results were presented by key stakeholders in civil society at "People's Forums," with the delegation of the European Commission in Nepal taking responsibility for hosting the poll and survey presentation to the international community. The findings were ultimately included into the constitutional processes, which benefitted from the participation of experts with comparative experiences of constitutional processes in India, Cambodia, Afghanistan, Thailand, South Africa and Kenya.

### **Demarching**

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*Using official channels to identify emerging or actual problems involving local authorities in order to protest human rights violations and to seek the removal of restrictions and obstacles to reformers and NGOs remains a classic tool of diplomats and missions, best exercised as part of the above sustained dialogue on the status of human rights.*

*Nota bene:* Privileged diplomatic contact has also been very important in conveying messages to the host country about future conduct or further developments and rewards or costs involved in different courses of action. Usually, such demarches are private, if public stands are judged apt to harden the authorities' positions, or otherwise be counterproductive. High-profile quarrels between an embassy and the host government should not be allowed to undermine the efforts of local democratic reformers, which always merit pride of place.

*Such as:* Diplomats reminding host governments of international obligations have had positive effects in many circumstances, most notably with regard to

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the joint undertakings under the CSCE’s Helsinki Final Act in Prague and other capitals in the late 1980s. Privately emphasizing to host authorities that they risk offending international public opinion at considerable national cost can also be effective, as was the case when religious authorities sentenced women to corporal or capital punishment in Nigeria and Saudi Arabia. Sometimes, of course, such advice is both ignored and resented. In Zimbabwe in the early 1990s, democratic embassies conveyed their deep misgivings over the withdrawal of legal redress for farmers whose property was summarily nationalized, which was a precursor of the deterioration to come in relations between the Zimbabwean government and accredited diplomats.

Currently, European governments are demarching Russian authorities at the highest level over restrictions in Russia on the activities of outside NGOs and on civil society. The US had similar messages for the Egyptian authorities in 2012. The EU’s policy of “more for more” (or conversely “less for less”) is central to the linkage between human rights observance and the strength of the relationship.

As a peak form of intervention, direct warnings by accredited ambassadors not to proceed with certain courses of repressive action are vital, such as the US Ambassador’s cautioning of Chilean authorities in the late 1980s, or warnings in 2004 to Ukrainian authorities that they would be held accountable for use of force, and to desist from jamming mobile phone networks. Marc S. Ellenbogen (2009), who writes “The Atlantic Eye” column from Prague, recalls Boris Pankin, who he describes as “the last Soviet Ambassador to Prague [and]...the highest-ranking Soviet diplomat to stand against the putsch against Gorbachev in the early ’90s...[he] stood down Czech troops who were preparing to put down the Velvet Revolution in 1989. He not only stood down the troops, he stood down the Czechoslovak [Communist] government as well.”

During Kenya’s presidential elections in 2008, missions communicated similar warnings about inciting ethnic violence, when there was evidence of organized text message transmissions denigrating and dehumanizing threats about people considered tribal and partisan rivals. The Kenyan telecommunications authorities and mobile phone companies then launched their own campaign of text messaging urging, instead, national peaceful reconciliation.

In Côte d’Ivoire in 2010-2011, diplomatic messaging insisted on an orderly transfer of power from losing President Laurent Gbagbo to President-elect Ouassane Ouattara, an issue that eventually had to be settled by French-led military intervention.

There are multiple examples of diplomatic demarches on the conduct of trials, arbitrary imprisonment and the treatment of prisoners. International and domestic public opinions often argue for making the fact of such demarches public, but the record shows that with a variety of countries, especially China, diplomats have counselled keeping some initial demarches as private as possible, and have been rewarded on several occasions by positive results. In Cuba, too, some visiting democratic ministers have made public announcements of demands to release

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prisoners of conscience for domestic political purposes. The public approach has not been productive with Cuban authorities; however, private negotiations prior to some high-level visits, as outlined in the Cuba case study, have had concrete results.

### **Reaching Out**

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#### **Connecting**

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*Connecting is related to the “informing” tool discussed earlier, but more in the sense of putting people — such as academic institutions, researchers, activists and experts — in contact with each other. Civil society provides democracy’s building blocks, and increasingly, civil society within a given country is finding support from international civil society. Much of the content of international relations is now carried through informal transnational networks of working contacts. Bringing local reform groups and individuals into contact with outsiders is at the heart of people-to-people diplomacy, through activities such as visits, conferences, exchanges and safe public access to the Internet or satellite communications from mission libraries. Embassies also enable civil society to access international assistance programs. Connecting senior levels of government and members of the democratic opposition and society to contacts in the sending state are important tools. In more closed societies, the message from civil society outside that non-violent change is possible builds confidence and hope among civil society groups inside and even among authorities more inclined to reform.*

*Nota bene:* Civil society is formed by networks of groups that are, by definition, beyond the direct control of the state. Such groups, which take time to develop, are often mobilized around specific purposes, such as women’s and youth issues, human rights, ecological protection, HIV/AIDS, culture, science, professional norms or even sports. Often, their purpose is non-political, such as the movements in Cuba to create a network of lending libraries. Such interest and action groups value contacts with NGOs and others able to help them on questions of material progress. Taken together, they form the continuity of social capital, which can form the foundation for democratic development. The experience of citizens’ participation in seeking to advance issues of specific concern can promote a jump from narrow functional objectives to wider ones, especially as their experience and demonstrable achievements earn such groups legitimacy and influence.

*Such as:* Widespread transitional assistance programs for democracy development and consolidation are monitored and often calibrated by diplomatic personnel. They scout for opportunities, make contacts and identify programs that are not working, as well as helping to ensure that assistance takes account of local conditions, capacities and needs. Diplomats in the field can also advise how to support groups in civil society most capable of encouraging bottom-up and “middle-out” change essential to the process of democratic transformation.

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There are eloquent histories of groups of democratic activists and others inside who have connected to supportive groups outside, but none more effective than the connections arranged for the ANC in South Africa and then for the UDF after its formation in 1983. Diplomatic representatives in South Africa maintained constant liaison with activists. Their ability to connect activists to supportive groups outside contributed to the preparation of personnel for the eventual responsibilities of government office. Diplomats also assisted with initial informal connections between the ANC and South African authorities or interest groups close to the authorities such as the Afrikaner Broederbund.

Embassies have traditionally been more easily connected to the elites in a society, but experience in many different situations shows that the impulses for political transformation and reform will not succeed if propelled from this top-down approach. Support for change is needed across society, from grassroots groups and, increasingly, from the growing numbers of citizens who are fluent with modern communications and are able to compare their situations with others outside. As one ambassador who is familiar with the incremental changes in governance occurring in several countries in the Middle East put it (prior to the Arab Spring), “It is not top-down, nor bottom-up, but led in the main by a sort of middle-out.” Experience has also shown, however, that care must be taken not to ignore the economically and socially marginalized, including victims of destabilizing forces of crime and extremism and, specifically, indigenous peoples.

Connecting to democratic opposition activists and leaders is important to help provide skills that enable them to pursue their democratization goals and to help prepare a new generation of leaders to assume office in a democratic transformation. Most of the Community of Democracies’ participating states are conscious of the need to be consistent in coverage, and note that civil society activity in several authoritarian states in the Middle East is undertaken by the Muslim Brotherhood and its affiliates, with which diplomatic representatives maintain contact. In Algiers in the 1990s, it became the practice for democratic embassies to ensure that visiting dignitaries called on opposition leaders, which both connected these leaders to important outside contacts, and enhanced their legitimacy at home. This policy is pretty much *de rigueur* today in authoritarian regimes such as Cuba, as the case study illustrates. Community of Democracies members will undertake sought-after political-level visits and engage cooperative programs, but will insist on meeting civil society and democratic opposition figures. In 2003-2004, embassies in Ukraine developed travel programs to capitals for opposition leaders for similar reasons. It is also useful to connect to democratic opposition leaders in exile, sometimes through diplomats and programs in third countries. Such programs have been instrumental in democracy preparation, from the South African experience to that of Burma/Myanmar today.

In repressive societies, diplomats can use modern communications technologies to circumvent travel restrictions against local human rights defenders or other activists seeking outside connections. In this fashion, late Cuban human rights

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advocate Oswaldo Payá, animator of the Varela Project, a citizens' petition aimed at promoting greater freedoms, was able to communicate by video link to an EU NGO forum on freedom of expression after he was denied an exit visa. EU diplomats also facilitated his telephone connections to EU ministers, journalists and NGOs as well.

Canada has adopted a “direct diplomacy” policy, a fusion of the new paradigm of reaching out to civil society and an innovative application of social media reflexes. It aims to engage and support non-state political actors contributing to the democratization process in their respective countries. Since each country must pursue its own path to democracy, the strategy that Canada adopts for each direct diplomacy campaign varies. Activities include building and sustaining relationships both in person and online; small-scale programming to strengthen political mobilization skills to improve strategic communications or ensure internet security; and a cycle of listening, messaging and measuring impacts. The technique is even used in Syria and Iran, where Canada has had to close its diplomatic missions.

The China case study outlines Canada's e-diplomacy there, which uses Sina Weibo — the largest social media website in China — to post 140-character messages on dedicated webpages, providing relevant information on current affairs and earning the embassy a very wide following of hundreds of thousands who can interact with the embassy via the site. Canadian Ambassador Mark McDowell underscores the importance of having a “young” voice and sharing interesting information with users, which “doesn't come naturally to diplomats.” The messaging also has to come across as a completely transparent exercise in communications — without hidden agendas — to both establish and retain credibility.

What distinguishes direct diplomacy and e-diplomacy from other diplomatic forms of democracy support is the priority they place on engaging non-state actors and the way they use social media and other technology to engage a much more dispersed set of political actors, in parallel to working with governmental authorities.

### Convening

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*Providing a safe and discreet locale for discussion, including among adversaries, has enabled contacts and exchanges aimed at political conciliation and the resolution of conflicts. Diplomats can also offer a venue for democratic activists to meet safely among themselves, helping them promote a legitimate status.*

*Nota bene:* As mentioned previously, diplomats posted to third countries can also play a convening role vis-à-vis locally resident political exiles, as well as supporting visiting oppositionists from inside the country, or organizing confidential third country contacts between adversaries.

*Such as:* The first mediated and authoritative contacts between the ANC and South African authorities took place outside the country and were sometimes arranged based on diplomatic liaison with the ANC offices in Lusaka. But embassy locales inside South Africa were often where South Africans of influence, such as the judiciary, first met ANC members informally. The Syrian opposition has been convening under the auspices of a pool of democracies in Turkey.

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Inside repressive states, diplomatic officers can provide neutral ground for round table discussion on sensitive topics that would not be allowed in public, or for participants to speak off the record. US and Canadian officers frequently hosted such events in South Africa. It is essential, of course, that embassies not be seen as playing political favourites among the various participants; political choice must be left in the hands of the citizens concerned. The EU delegation in Moscow is playing such a role, hosting civil society discussion and involving state authorities as well as NGOs, as the case study on Russia shows. The US makes space available at its missions for civil society groups struggling against local bias to hold discussion, such as the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community, and also invites local officials when this could be helpful.

Publicly visible receptions to honour civil society, cultural groups and political dissidents, which were frequent at democratic embassies in Prague and Budapest in the 1980s, help elevate the influence of protest and reform movements. Receptions can also have the merit of putting democracy activists and authorities together, although practice varies. Some embassies, such as the Czech Embassy in Havana insist on such mingling. Others hold separate national day receptions for civil society and authorities. The local authorities attend or not, depending on the company.

In transitional countries, embassies can also play a convening role to bring disparate parties and leaders together prior to democratic elections, as the US Embassy did in Liberia and Ghana, facilitating the parties’ ability to work with one another after elections in a politically pluralist landscape. This counters a post-election tendency in several countries for majority winners to feel entitled to “take all” and to penalize losing opponents, especially if they represent ethnic minorities.

### Facilitating

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*Using the good offices of missions and diplomats can facilitate positive cooperation among democrats, the reconciliation of different ethnic or other groups in pluralist societies, or encourage democrats and local authorities to advance democratic outcomes. Diplomats can legitimately help peace activists with the transmission of messages to others both within and outside the country. Missions can also play a role in facilitating third-country peaceful abdication or exit strategies for discredited authoritarian figures.*

*Such as:* At times of crisis, diplomats, especially from neighbouring countries, can play an important role in encouraging the mediation of disputes, including in the aftermath of contested elections. Sometimes, however, governments that are protecting their monopoly of power can shy away from mediation efforts, as was the case initially in Kenya after the integrity of its January 2008 election results were challenged. In this case, international mediation was ultimately effective, especially through the efforts of fellow African, ex-UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan to help establish a power-sharing deal. Satisfactory mediated outcomes were also obtained in Côte d’Ivoire and Kyrgyzstan. Conversely, Robert Mugabe has

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consistently frustrated diplomatic attempts by South Africa and Nigeria to facilitate reconciliation in Zimbabwe.

The support of democracies from outside helped Kenya to avoid repeating the post-electoral violence in 2008 by undertaking a program of electoral reform, civil society strengthening, civic education, and youth leadership and empowerment. Through its embassy in Nairobi, the US CSO supported the creation of Champions of Peace, a coalition of Kenyan civil society groups composed of women's, professional and religious groups, and district peace committees in the Rift Valley and Nyanza provinces. The umbrella coalition worked to counter political manipulation, strengthen constructive engagement with police and other security actors, and build a system to coordinate consultation and intervention on early warning and early response.

Opposition movements often begin as rival factions, or splinter into them. Diplomats in South Africa, Chile and Serbia helped opposition movements in these countries overcome their factional disarray and build united alliances for democratic reform. The case study on Chile records the role of the Mitterrand socialists in France in convening diverse exile groups together to encourage a united front against Pinochet. A similar dynamic has played out in relations between democratic governments and diplomats and the Syrian opposition, especially in Turkey.

A dedicated US program to support democratic transitions under Ambassador Bill Taylor, special coordinator for Middle East transitions, was created in September 2011. Following the formation of the Syrian Opposition Coalition in November 2012, a series of workshops was organized in coordination with Ambassador Robert Ford and the US Embassy, mostly in Turkey. The workshops facilitate planning for civil administration and transition by supporting the training of activists, organizations and professionals to prepare them for transition. Workshops were devoted to consensus building, women's issues, youth and grassroots activism, media, civil resistance and local administration, placing special emphasis on countering sectarian violence and convening participants from different religious and ethnic communities. As one participant commented, "Even though we all know of each other, we never would have come together if we hadn't attended this course."

The case studies on Tunisia and Egypt relate the difficulties democrats had in uniting with parties, particularly religious ones. Religious parties garnered half the vote, but dominated because they had a common representation. While religious parties and the democratic movement share the search for dignity and affirmation of identity, they can sometimes be at odds. As one active player has put it, "if they collide — disaster; but if the effort succeeds to keep them compatible, there is a chance for an overall success." Embassies in Tunis, Cairo and elsewhere in the Arab world are using their convening power to help the efforts of, for example, Radwan Masmoudi of the Centre for the Study of Islam and Democracy to convene the disparate players in the unfolding political narratives.

Many of the divisive forces in societies devolve from irredentist ethnic, sectarian or tribal differences, which can surface with sudden violence and force, and can be

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amplified by waves of migration — even in working democracies. Inclusive pluralism is a fundamental prerequisite to successful democratic governance; indeed, as Daron Acemoglu and James Robinson (2012) argue, inclusive institutional structures are critical to economic achievement.

Studies by the RAND Corporation show that since 1900, 80 percent of conflicts within states have been resolved by political processes rather than by force prevailing in favour of one side. Some democracies have pursued a special vocation in public and private diplomacy by attempting to mentor and support the reconciliation of ethnic, social, cultural or other divisions in, for example, the Western Balkans, Northern Ireland, across the Middle East and in Sri Lanka where (despite the initiatives of Norway, in particular) there is still a vivid community problem adversely affecting the Tamil population. The Norwegian Foreign Ministry annually hosts conflict mediators and key peace process actors from conflict states such as Somalia, Mali and Syria at the Oslo Forum at the Losby Gods Hotel in partnership with the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue.

Settlement immigration countries such as Canada and Australia have gained specific expertise regarding the integration and accommodation of diverse communities. But where ethnic or other irredentist antagonisms surface and break into violence, the democratic international community, mindful of the horrors of the Rwandan genocide, must attempt to intervene. In fact, several democracies have established a “genocide prevention” capacity in their governments, which relies heavily on diplomats on the ground to identify warning signs. Prevention becomes paramount: in Kenya, prevention activities were accompanied by clear diplomatic warnings that those responsible for inciting ethnic violence would pay a price in prosecution and would be barred from travel to the democratic countries concerned.

Another technique of facilitation is an “endgame” strategy, offering “safe exits” to resolve acute crises. Such an exit was made for President Marcos of the Philippines, for Mobutu Sese Seko of Zaire and President Fujimori of Peru, defusing potential threats of violent resistance to democratic transition. The endgame to the crisis in Kyrgyzstan in 2010 depended on an exile arrangement that was brokered by the US, Russia, Kazakhstan and the help of Belarus.

A reverse example would be the strong leadership role of Japan’s diplomats and government in brokering a solution enabling Cambodian political leaders in exile to return to Phnom Penh to contest the first democratic multi-party elections in 1998 without fear of reprisal. Indeed, several diplomats personally visited one such leader, Prince Ranariddh, in exile in Bangkok to provide the assurances.

Lastly, in societies where outside contacts are restricted, diplomats can pass messages and legitimately facilitate communications between democratic activists and outside supporters, or contact between ordinary citizens and family members and civil society elsewhere, using embassy communications channels and Internet access.

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### Financing

*Arm's length resources can be especially valuable to start-up NGOs, independent media or anti-poverty action groups. Often, small projects avoid the sorts of government controls and bureaucratization associated with large-scale aid activity. Embassies have the critical role of "spotting" for more substantial financing for larger worthwhile projects.*

*Nota bene:* This is a notoriously sensitive area. Protests by authorities of "outside financing" are common and lead, in many cases, to curbs and restrictions. Precious financial assistance will be marred if it can be made to appear motivated by ulterior political considerations.

*Such as:* There are examples of diplomatic missions fast-disbursing funds to grassroots local initiatives wherever there has been a democratic transition. Mission funds should, however, avoid competition with the programs of international NGOs, which have the longer-term development of civil society as a central purpose. Embassy-directed donations often go toward very specific and modest cash flow requirements of youth movements, start-up independent media operations, the organization of public events or serve a humanitarian need in emergencies. Czech, Slovak, Danish, Norwegian and Swedish funding today operates in such a manner in repressive societies. In countries in the midst of difficult democratic transitions, such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the funds can be rapidly directed to pockets of need, but this is best carried out in consultation with other donors to avoid duplication and oversight. In the 1980s, Canadian Embassy funds in South Africa could be deployed immediately to victims of apartheid to cover legal or other court costs. In all cases, even though such funds are often modest, for shoestring beneficiaries, the merits of fast-disbursement and being unencumbered by paperwork obligations in emergency situations are significant.

There is a record of repressive governments alleging that such disbursements engage embassies and diplomats improperly in internal matters of state. Authorities in apartheid South Africa and Pinochet's Chile threatened expulsions over the practice. In Russia, beginning in 2005, local reform groups and NGOs that accepted such funds were penalized through the denial of accreditation and, thus, their ability to operate. Both Cuba and Iran have prosecuted opposition groups and human rights activists, alleging that their acceptance of foreign funds constituted treasonable activity. Embassies adjust their practices to ensure that there is no liability to recipients from such small-scale funding, and in some countries refrain from financial support of opposition figures, concentrating on development NGOs. It is important that any embassy funding be demonstrably at arm's length to specific electoral or partisan political purposes so that embassies can vigorously contest any constraining action by authorities. In short, the purpose can legitimately support efforts to obtain a transparent democratic process without supporting one political candidate or outcome over others.

### Showcasing

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*At the heart of public diplomacy, democratic development showcasing is less a matter of national self-promotion than an effort to present examples, models or solutions suitable for local application. There is, of course, no more powerful example than the election of an African-American US president, or a female president of Brazil who had been tortured as a prisoner of conscience. Through their outreach, missions are in a position to highlight norms accepted elsewhere, best practices and successful achievements through seminars, training, conferences and even cultural narratives. These can be of instructive or motivational benefit to the public, local authorities, NGOs and reform groups. As mentioned earlier, representatives of democracies that have themselves emerged from repressive regimes have enhanced credibility as mentors for human rights defenders and democratic activists today. Most societies have had to confront the need to correct the abuse of civil liberties in their own histories, and these narratives can be presentational assets in emerging democracies facing the challenges of change and reconciliation.*

*Nota bene:* Sometimes “best practices” in civil behaviour are evident in host countries in non-political spheres such as sports, or economic and cultural activities that cross ethnic or confessional lines in otherwise divided societies. They merit support for showcasing these values from within the host country itself. Civic consciousness is especially important for security forces and personnel. Exposing security forces to best practices in human rights and democracy through international training can help to prevent harsh reactions to non-violent protests. Discipline training in non-violent techniques is also valuable for civil society to reduce the risk of counterproductive provocation.

*Such as:* Democratic societies have had experience in many aspects of governance whose features can be immensely instructive to societies looking for guidance as they undergo transition, with the caveat that most applications are not directly transferable, needing considerable adaptation to local social and cultural conditions. Some of the demonstration and assistance can be very specific and technical: Canada, for example, promotes guidance to multilingual societies on the practices of simultaneous legislative drafting to enable legal linguistic equivalencies. Especially compelling is training conducted by countries that have themselves emerged from repressive regimes, since the representatives of such newer democracies can more readily relate to the challenges and conditions of dissidents and civil society operating under the strains of repression.

Much public diplomacy is more general, however, in support of the merits of pluralistic accommodation, the peaceful settlement of disputes or moderation in the pursuit of political objectives. Such showcasing efforts exposed Chilean opposition groups of the left, for example, which were somewhat doctrinaire, to the advantages of dialogue and pragmatic adaptation evident among successfully elected European social-democrats in the 1980s. Showcasing exemplary efforts in non-sectarian hiring practices can help lead the way: examples include the coffee growing industry

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in Rwanda, or Northern Ireland, where major Canadian employers hired across traditional sectarian lines, and where the Belfast professional ice hockey team, composed of foreigners, refused to reveal members' religious affiliations.

A growing series of workshops for activists and civil society together with officials and experts from democracies aim at building capacity and preparedness for inclusive pluralism, such as the conference on pluralism in MENA in December 2012 at the Centre Culturel Canadien in Paris, co-organized by the *Handbook* team with the European Council for Foreign Relations, the Ligue Internationale des Droits de l'Homme and the Institut de Recherche et Débat sur la Gouvernance.

More general still are events presenting the cultural or other achievements of a democratic society to enhance its capacity to serve as a democratic role model. Again, the American Cultural Center in Rangoon deserves recognition as an example of a facility providing a public precious exposure to international culture otherwise denied by the repressive and inward Burmese military regime.

The showcasing of ethics for military and security personnel has only been accorded importance relatively recently, but with demonstrable beneficial effect. The training of Ukraine military officers in democratic governance responsibilities in NATO partnership programs contributed in some measure to their restraint in dealing with demonstrations during the electoral crisis of the Orange Revolution. NGO-to-NGO training workshops showcasing the techniques of disciplined non-violent protest contributed to a counterpart restraint on the part of dissident and protest groups in those and other demonstrations.

Such training has been ongoing for representatives of the Syrian opposition, though sadly, repressive force has regrettably turned the conflict in Syria into a violent one. Training is provided for the defensive use of communications technologies, human rights monitoring and evidence-gathering and leadership training, including training for Imams in democracy provided by the International Federation for Human Rights, with its unique assets of national representations on the ground, and Human Rights Watch. In cooperation with the Centre for Civil Society and Democracy in Syria, the US State Department has been helping Syrian activists build in workshops and programs in Turkey capacity for local administration and providing secure communications training.

The training of police, customs officials and prosecutors to provide an understanding of civic responsibility has been a staple of many democracy support programs of Community of Democracies donor countries. By way of contrast, during the Cold War, counter-insurgency training in inter-American programs that did not emphasize human rights indirectly contributed to subsequent massive abuses by Latin American militaries against democratic activists and others.

The issue of consistency is paramount. There is little benefit in showcasing positive narratives of civil behaviour if there are contrary examples of illegal or abusive treatment of people in the custody of the showcasing state, or if the state coddles relationships with abusive partners for strategic reasons.

“Older” democracies have, of course, experienced large-scale abuses of civil rights in their own pasts, in respect of racial or religious minorities, indigenous people, women or labour movements, and have also suspended normal civil liberties at times of exceptional stress such as during war or at other times of fear. The process of democratic self-correction is endless. But the transparent presentation of the lessons of such corrections can also be a showcase feature for the benefit of emerging democracies struggling with ethnic and other tensions and inequalities — not in the manner of preaching, but in that of empathy for the challenges involved in pursuing change.

The instructional exhibit of better practices can be indirect. The Canadian Embassy’s Weibo site in China caused a major stir when Ambassador David Mulroney’s official car, a modest Toyota, was highlighted for its fuel efficiencies; Chinese readers took from the illustration the contrast with the myriad of Chinese officials flaunting late-model luxury limos. The rather utilitarian wristwatch of Polish Foreign Minister Sikorski drew favourable and ironic comment in Ukrainian media when contrasted to the ostentatiously worn luxury watches of some of his Ukrainian counterparts.

The economic downturns in Western economies have raised the question of reverse showcasing. “What do you have to teach us?” is a rhetorical question posed since the financial crisis of 2007. Commentary from China has been trenchant. Alex Lo (2013) asks why the world refers still to the “Asian” financial crisis of 1997-1998, or to “Mexican,” “Russian” or “Brazilian” crises, and yet calls the current crisis a “global” one and not “Western”? “For decades,” Lo continues, “everyone assumed western policymakers and central bankers knew all about economics and finance, so such crises happened only to little brown people. But hubris is the moment before you fall flat on your face.” Nobody wants to have to showcase systemic difficulties, but in discussing them, democracies and their diplomats can showcase transparency and objectivity, and self-corrective remedial behaviour.

### **Defending Democrats**

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#### **Demonstrating**

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*By using the prestige and offices of the head of mission and other diplomats to show public respect and even solidarity for human rights defenders, democratic activists and reformers sends the message that such citizens and groups have legitimacy and importance in the eyes of outside partners. Diplomats understand that such demonstration needs to stop short of seeming to embrace particular individuals or parties with respect to democratic political outcomes. Care should always be taken to ensure that diplomats are seen to be supporting a democratic process rather than specific results. Encouraging international humanitarian awards and recognition for human rights defenders also helps legitimize their positions in their own countries.*

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*Nota bene:* Public demonstrations or protests in authoritarian societies require courage and the willingness of citizens to entertain risks in the exercise of freedom of speech. Such courage merits the public support of democratic representatives. The public representation of sympathy by diplomats on specific issues or events can be used in tandem with private demarches to authorities. All diplomats need access to grassroots activity and opinion, and some embassies in non-democratic countries assign primary responsibility for contact with dissidents to specific embassy officers, but in presentation, it is important to demonstrate that the head of mission remains visibly engaged as the chief human rights officer, without making him or her a lightning rod for the hostility of host country authorities.

*Such as:* Historically, changes in repressive regimes occur because the people support change as their democratic right. In the absence of elections, this is habitually expressed by public protests or demonstrations, though “street action” alone is often less effective than the buildup of a civil society capacity to support democratic transition in the longer term. It is standard practice for repressive regimes to ban such gatherings, but the people often find a way to peacefully circumvent the states of emergency or special laws that authorities decree and erect to protect the undemocratic status quo. In apartheid South Africa, marches to the public funerals of fallen activists became a vehicle for protest and the presence of the representatives of democratic diplomatic missions among the people sent a message of support, as well as offering a shield of sorts against violent repression. The role of diplomats in showing support for the rights to protest by appearing personally at such demonstrations or symbolic marches has been established in such locales as Budapest, Santiago, Manila, Belgrade, Kyiv, Havana and Kathmandu. Gay rights demonstration in the Balkans in recent years have drawn violence tolerated officially, but visible diplomatic solidarity at parades and marches has contributed to improvement.

The role of the late Mark Palmer, US Ambassador to Hungary between 1986 and 1990, was groundbreaking in the profession. In 1988-1989, Ambassador Palmer made a point of being visibly and personally engaged with opposition and activist groups, marching with demonstrators for change. It was, at the time, a controversial role for a foreign diplomat, including in circles in Washington, DC, but in a state visit to Budapest in 1989, US President George H. W. Bush declared that the Hungarian authorities had to face up to such change as inevitable, thereby validating Ambassador Palmer’s role. Mark Palmer is remembered in Hungary as one of the 10 most influential “Hungarians” of the twentieth century, an extraordinary accolade for a diplomat, and one anticipating the changes that are central to this *Handbook*’s themes of change and transformation.

In other locales, such as Zimbabwe, ambassadors were especially targeted by security forces, and it fell more often to embassy political officers to be present at witness protests, although some ambassadors, such as James McGee of the US, took a proactive personal role in going out to show support for intimidated and even abused opposition supporters.

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Whatever the level of representation, it has been reinforcing for democrats to see the support of the kind that US Ambassador to Syria Robert S. Ford and French Ambassador to Syria Eric Chevallier extended when they visited Hama during peaceful protests and stayed an extra day. “Residents feel a kind of protection with the presence of the ambassador,” said Omar al-Habbal, an activist. “The authorities wouldn’t dare react with violence” (cited in Shadid, 2011). The same two ambassadors together with colleagues from the United Kingdom, Germany, Canada, Japan, the Netherlands and the European Union, aimed to show the same kind of support when they attended the vigil for reform activist Giyath Matar, who was killed under torture by security forces. “It is important to show Giyath’s family and Syrians that the world has noticed what is going on,” said UK Ambassador Simon Collis (cited in Ali, 2011). That troops opened fire on mourning demonstrators once the ambassadors were out of the way does not diminish the value of their message of support.

Australian diplomat Roland Rich recalls that Indonesian pro-democracy demonstrators said at the time that “having foreigners alongside was like borrowing a little piece of their democracies.” But the demonstration of privately communicated support for the rights of activists can also be very effective in sending a message to authorities monitoring communications. Maintaining regular phone contact with democratic opposition leaders has been a protective recourse in many crisis situations, and especially when it is assumed that local security is listening in.

More publicly visible are diplomats’ home visits to threatened or confined democracy activists, or, as in Havana in 2009, to the wives of prisoners of conscience and the monitoring of political trials. Some embassies of democracies in repressive societies make a habit of inviting the families of political prisoners to embassy events with a family theme, such as parties at Christmas or other festivals. Ambassadors in such societies also accompany released political prisoners home from prison at the time of their release. Such gestures, as well as receptions and other hospitality events that make a point of including both dissidents and officials, can reinforce the self-confidence of civil society in the legitimacy of their peaceful work, and help to create productive initial contacts between authorities and civil society leadership. The most important value to demonstrate is consistency.

Validating suspicions that what really counted for Western countries were security and economic advantages can be costly and devastatingly demoralizing to civil society while emboldening dictators and their henchmen. When a new Canadian prime minister chose Libya as his first destination on behalf of an engineering company (subsequently disgraced for the systemic bribery of officials to win contracts), he undercut Ottawa’s moral credibility and leverage. In Bahrain, the United States sent a counterproductive message when it felt obliged to defer to Saudi support for the fellow Sunni Khalifa regime in its crackdown on the Shia majority, including the prosecution of dozens of doctors and nurses for having treated peaceful demonstrators injured by security forces.

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Egyptian activists make the point that, after the US invaded Iraq in 2003 — an action which was opposed by 90 percent of Arabs — the Bush administration placed its priority in relations with Egypt to acquire Mubarak's support. This unpopular position made the regime repress the population even more, and conveyed the message to beleaguered democrats that their democratic cause didn't matter.

### Verifying and Witnessing

*The verifying of election processes and results is an important and widespread international practice in which diplomatic missions have an ongoing responsibility. The witnessing of trials and hearings by diplomats is also widespread and is now generally accepted internationally as a means of providing or supporting an independent verification of disputes or the health of detainees. There are, of course, terrible histories of the fearful and depraved repression of opponents and activists without any concession to pretense of legal authority, such as the tens of thousands of murders carried out by the Argentine military between 1976 and 1983. But today, even autocratic regimes prefer to display the trappings of a legal process, however sham. In the Internet age, summary trials of dissidents and activists can rarely be completely hidden from view. "Show trials," meant to distort the truth for public consumption, are similarly exposed for what they are. In taking public and private issue with the distortion of the process of justice for repressive political purposes, diplomats are representing the norms and standards of universally applicable human rights and the rule of law, and the arguments by repressive authorities that these matters are strictly internal concerns are without merit.*

*Nota bene:* In addition to the conditions and circumstances of prisoners, enquiries and demarches about detainees and political prisoners need to focus on the illegitimacy of their incarceration. International and diplomatic scrutiny of elections themselves is also by now widespread, but inadequate attention is paid to prior and ongoing support for the selection, formation and training of preparatory and supervisory national election commissions able to adjudicate fairness in pre-election publicity, as well as the election process itself.

*Such as:* Diplomatic representatives have been prominent whenever possible at the prosecution trials of democratic activists, journalists and representatives of civil society, for example in Prague, Cairo and Tashkent. As British diplomat Philip Barclay (2010) reports, "Part of the role of a British diplomat in a repressive country is to attend political trials. This is ostensibly to monitor the quality of justice being dispensed, but often — when the charges are blatantly groundless — it's also a statement of protest." Of course, there are still repressive jurisdictions where such trials are secret and closed, including mass sentencing of demonstrators and monks in Burma/Myanmar and of dissidents in Iran. The fates of such prisoners remain an enduring prima facie concern of missions. The very fact of incarceration is the forefront issue; the presentation of "prisoners' lists" to authorities in China and Cuba has been a mainstay of diplomatic representation for years.

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An iconic case concerned Azerbaijani blogger and human rights activist Emin Milli, who was director of the Friedrich Ebert Foundation in Azerbaijan, and who had assisted the Council of Europe with over 40 cases of prisoners of conscience in Azerbaijani jails. Milli was himself attacked by police in 2009 and eventually tried along with a colleague in a selective prosecution for the sake of example: “When two bloggers are punished in this way, there will not be a third,” said Vafa Guluzade, an ex-adviser on security to President Heydar Aliyev whose son Ilham has succeeded him as dictator (cited in Barry, 2011). Reporters Without Borders, the EU, the Council of Europe and several embassies made strenuous representations about Emin Milli and ultimately, US President Barack Obama intervened in September 2010 when meeting Azerbaijani President Heydar Aliyev at the United Nations in New York. Milli was eventually released and, amazingly, continued his campaign of agitation for human rights.

The conduct of authorities toward those in custody also matters greatly. Diplomatic representatives in various jurisdictions insist, when possible, on verifying the health of such prisoners, such as after arbitrary arrests of Zimbabwe opposition leader Morgan Tsvangirai and colleagues in the opposition MDC.

The Magnitsky case in Russia has received wide attention. As mentioned previously, Magnitsky was a forensic lawyer who became a whistle-blower and brought to public notice a massive tax fraud. He was then himself arrested and died in prison of medical neglect. In 2012, US Congress passed a law imposing targeted sanctions on Russian prosecution, prison and tax officials implicated in the case.

When violent prisoner abuse becomes public knowledge to the point that authorities are pressured to conduct official inquiries or even trials of security personnel, such as with respect to the killing of Canadian-Iranian photojournalist Zahra Kazemi-Ahmadabadi at Iranian hands, diplomats have sought to witness these legal proceedings as well, with admirable solidarity.

International observation and assessment of elections, especially by regional organizations, is now an almost universal practice. Some democratic groupings have been able to provide such authoritative monitoring that they attract wide international participation, such as EU-led election monitoring in Lebanon, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which included many non-EU observers among the team, or Commonwealth monitoring of elections in member countries.

The ODIHR election observation missions have become integral to the OSCE’s *raison d’être*. Though its bestowal of “failing grades” for elections in Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan or Azerbaijan that it deemed not to be “fair and free” was often ignored by authorities at the time, the accumulated challenge to their legitimacy is an important asset for diplomatic representatives in those countries. The observation exercise does more than legitimize the election returns: as demonstrated in the case of South Africa, the presence of international observers provides encouragement and reassurance to democracy advocates and to the general public. It also bestows a measure of security by showing that the eyes of the world are watching. This helps promote restraint on the part of all parties to the process. However, more attention

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needs to be paid to the training of local election commissions whose credibility is essential to sustaining belief in the integrity of results and avoidance of post-electoral violence.

For years, embassies and their personnel have taken an active and significant role in the observation process, including observing local elections, as the Japanese mission did in Ukraine in 2004, observing violations in a by-election in Mukacheve that anticipated abuses practiced in the general election shortly after. In Senegal's 1988 presidential elections, several democratic embassies agreed to pool their efforts. "Embassy officers who attended rallies shared their impressions with counterparts, and a coordinated election-day schedule was drawn up to avoid overlapping visits to polling stations. The candidates and party campaign leaders knew of and appreciated this careful, coordinated attention to their campaign efforts." Ultimately, "the diplomats agreed that the results reflected the will of the people: the majority of Senegalese voters wanted Abdou Diouf to remain in office. This joint position proved useful in maintaining a common diplomatic position in response to civil disturbances which broke out in poorer sections of Dakar as dissatisfied voters felt their preferred candidate should have been chosen."

Such efforts are sometimes not appreciated by the host country. In Zimbabwe's 2002 presidential elections, the EU observation team's leader, Swedish politician Pierre Schori, was declared unwelcome and the observation team pulled out on the grounds that it could not do its job without him. But resident EU and other democratic embassies coordinated coverage of the polling booths on their own which, while less than adequate, was extremely helpful in reaching the conclusion the election had not been fair and free.

### Protecting

We were very active in attending political trials, so that defendants knew that if anything would happen to them, there would be protests.

— a diplomat in Prague, 1980s

*Visible support for individuals and groups under threat, as well as their families, provides some reassurance for democratic activists and human rights defenders and NGOs. Ultimately, in the event of breakdown and crisis, missions have performed an essential humanitarian function by giving refuge to asylum seekers.*

*Such as:* In periods of tension, diplomats can often defuse a crisis. Their presence may persuade security authorities to back off a violent confrontation with peaceful groups.

Protection can be implicit, communicated by signs of support, telephone calls to check on the security of targeted activists and by declarations. The authorities may seek to label such declarations as outside interference; it suits the political

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narratives of repressive regime to paint protests as being foreign-inspired. But as the Burmese confrontations in 2007, or those of Iran in 2009 illustrated, the people know when their protests and appeals for change are popular and authentically and wholly indigenous. They welcome supportive declarations as statements of solidarity endorsing the legitimacy of their popular cause.

Diplomats can cast a wide protective net. People who are arbitrarily jailed fear for their families. In Turkmenistan, the British Embassy made a point of being in visible contact with the families of persons arrested for political reasons. In more dire circumstances, when the force of repression is without brakes or beyond persuasion, the episodes of diplomats extending protection have been many, going back to the legendary work of Swedish diplomat Raoul Wallenberg during World War II, or US Consul in Marseilles Varian Fry, who, without much support from superiors, saved many artists, Jews and leftists on Nazi arrest lists. Latin American diplomats in Europe also saved thousands of lives, notably Mexican Consul in Marseilles Gilberto Bosques, Salvadoran Consul in Geneva José Arturo Castellanos and Luis Martins de Souza Dantas of Brazil. It was Australian diplomat Bruce Haig who drove South African democrat and editor Donald Woods to safety out of South Africa. It was New Zealand’s Ambassador John McArthur who spirited a trade union official dressed as a woman to the Swedish Embassy and asylum.

Sadly, however, the list of embassies that did not intervene or provide refuge because it was seen to be outside the scope of classically sanctioned diplomatic conduct was, for many years, a much longer one. More recent practice, however, has increasingly been to help wherever possible. Numerous examples include the humanitarian acceptance of thousands of asylum seekers in Santiago, Chile, after September 1973 and at the Embassy of Peru in Havana in 1980; the events of 1989 in Prague when embassies opened their grounds to East German refugees; the granting of safe shelter for a year to Chinese dissident Fang Lizhi by the US Embassy in Beijing in the aftermath of Tiananmen; the assistance from the embassies of Poland, Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia in gaining safe exit for threatened democratic opposition members in Ukraine prior to 2004; and Australia’s acceptance of West Papua self-determination activists in 2006.

The asylum-seeking episode of Chinese dissident Chen Guangcheng in April 2012 is exemplary. When Chen sought asylum, the US Embassy in Beijing had to weigh the fallout with Chinese authorities, particularly on the eve of key Strategic and Economic Dialogue meetings. With “clear eyes for what we were getting into,” US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton made this an opportunity to build a more solid China-US relationship. But Chinese “choices” had to be reconciled with “our values.” There could not be a better metaphor for the themes of the *Diplomat’s Handbook*.

## **THE PARTNERS AND APPLICATIONS**

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In becoming “coherence agents” with specific skill sets, diplomats are usually more likely to be effective in their support of democratic development by focussing on practical applications rather than the articulation of lofty aspirations of political theory. The partnerships that matter the most are those with a human face.

### **People-to-People, Democrat-to-Democrat**

#### **Local Groups and Coalitions: Students, Youth, Ecologists and Trade Unions**

Coalitions of groups and bodies such as the UDF in South Africa are often the foundations of an emerging democratic society. In retrospect, they even constituted a form of government-in-waiting, though often, because of the closed circumstances of their society, they have little opportunity to gain the relevant and necessary experience. Nearly every country has informal local groupings of NGOs — although until recently, they were sparser in number in the Middle East. Their activities and primary interests are often not even political: groups that are trying to fill social services gaps, such as childcare or centres for the elderly are basic components of emerging civil society and merit support on humanitarian and developmental levels. Beyond their specific interests, through informal publications, performances and public outreach, together, they can also spawn a new civic sense of national identity and purpose. In the process, civil society acquires a growing stature of legitimacy and builds capacity for continuity in transition and eventual self-government. The process is reinforced by the efforts of democratic embassies and NGOs to engage them as partners and provide them support and, as appropriate, training.

#### **Women's Groups**

As underlined in the *Handbook's* introduction, the issue of women's rights is crucial to successful economic and democratic development. Countries that do not accept gender equality as a universal human right condemn themselves dually: they deny the rights of half their citizens, and in so doing they hobble their prospects.

In many societies and situations, groups formed to defend and advocate on behalf of women are often the first experience that women may have of personal involvement in public and social issues. Representing home and family perspectives, as well as specific workplace or professional interests, women's groups have a central role in the emergence of civil society. The mothers and widows of those missing or killed under repressive regimes, such as the Mothers of the Disappeared in Argentina, the Women in Black in Serbia or the wives of prisoners of conscience, such as Las Damas de Blanco in Cuba, earn a special place in national consciences.

### Cultural Groups

When he was Vice President of the International Crisis Group, Alain Déléroz wrote, in homage to a murdered theatre director in Tashkent in 2009, “art is one of the finest forms of resistance to dictators.”

The role of cultural groups in expanding the habit of freedom of expression was essential in many experiences in democratic transformation. One long-time NGO observer of Nigeria reflected, “The cause of Nigerian democracy, human rights and dignity has been infinitely better served by its artists and writers such as Chinua Achebe, Wole Soyinka, Ken Saro-Wiwa, and his son Ken Wiwa, and the great musician Fela Kuti, than by its compromised political class.”

Cultural groups and artists have catalytic roles going beyond performance or art, and diplomats have a convening capacity that can showcase such artists and creators. As far back as 1975, Australian diplomat Diane Johnstone invited black artist Michael Muapola to her Pretoria apartment to exhibit his paintings, incurring the wrath of the apartheid regime, but contributing mightily to African self-respect. From Minsk to Rangoon, diplomats have hosted performances by artists banned from presenting in public.

Writing of Prague in the late 1980s, Canadian diplomat Rob McRae (1997) recounts his introduction to Karl Srp, “the head of the so-called Jazz Section... of the musician’s union [which] under Srp...had become a hotbed of underground music and video production, as well as samizdat (clandestine) publishing.” McRae subsequently observed that through culture, “a new civic society had begun to emerge outside the control of the state, with a whole network of underground publications, performances, exhibitions, videos, newspapers, artistic and literary ‘salons.’ These had started to reach beyond the opposition to the grey zone of individuals who were at least inwardly, if not openly, opposed to the regime” (ibid.: 31).

### Human Rights Defenders

The work of human rights defenders in repressive societies is completely central. It is lonely and is always courageous. Their cause is immensely assisted by the solidarity shown by the representatives of democracies and the international acknowledgement of their efforts, such as the Nobel Peace Prize bestowed on Iranian human rights defender Shirin Ebadi and on Yemeni women’s advocate Tawakkol Karman. Chilean human rights lawyer Ignacio Walker (later Chile’s foreign minister) recalls that, over four years under the Pinochet regime spent defending hundreds of unjustly accused and jailed democracy activists, he won few cases in the biased courts, but the demonstrable support he received from embassies and especially the Roman Catholic Church and the international recognition they bestowed, saved many lives.

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## Scholars, Researchers, Academic Institutes, Think Tanks and Centres of Excellence

Conferences on the challenges facing democrats in authoritarian settings are constantly taking place in democracies with the participation of dissidents and scholars in exile, and embassies often facilitate attendance from civil society from within the countries in question.

Connecting scholars with scholars and think tanks with think tanks is a multiple enrichment. For embassies, partnerships and projects undertaken with the scholarly and research community often engage the future leaders of the country, however unlikely it may seem in repressive societies at the time. They also engage a country's construction of objective collective memory, which is important in building a process of reconciliation. One of the most ambitious projects in preparation for the assumption of the responsibilities of government occurred as the result of a request made by Nelson Mandela shortly after his release from prison, to Canadian Prime Minister Brian Mulroney, to help the ANC boost its competence in economic matters. The initiative spawned the Macro-Economic Research Group, involving over 100 economic specialists from several developed democracies.

## **Institutional Partnerships and Processes**

### Independent Media

The role of independent media goes beyond the healthy practice of speaking truth to power. Media, including the rapidly growing phenomenon of blogs, have a monitoring role on governance, and catalyze public discussion. Supporting the emergence of independent media outlets has been one of the consistently successful partnership activities of embassies, often conducted in partnership with NGOs and news gatherers from Community of Democracies member countries. Programs that help to train reporters in "covering city hall" to promote transparency at local levels is a less politically sensitive approach to building capacity. Through support for networks of alternative outside servers, democracies can encourage access to international information and websites for Internet users inside repressive and closed societies.

On occasion, missions also directly help local news agencies and outlets with project funding. Examples include start-up funding for a radio station in Moscow and a desktop newspaper in Dakar, which became hubs of successful diversified independent communications enterprises. The first principle, of course, has been to separate such assistance from any intention of influencing the news or views reported by the outlet in question.

Support can be threefold. In Algiers, over the last several years, embassies have encouraged the emergence of independent newspapers and outlets without seeking to influence the news or editorial content of their publications. At the same time,

they have encouraged the state-operated newspaper *El Moudjahid* in its efforts to present balanced reporting of events. Lastly, embassies have encouraged training for local journalists, who also benefit from the examples of travelling press corps accompanying visiting dignitaries, and their direct and candid questioning in pursuit of transparency and newsworthy information.

The transition to democracy from authoritarian regimes can be particularly challenging for public broadcasters as they transit from a propaganda role to one of objective newsgathering and reporting, as well as analysis. Such democratic arm’s length public broadcasters such as the Australian, Canadian and British broadcasting corporations have mentored transitions, as with the South African Broadcasting Corporation (with its 15 million daily radio listeners) at the behest, originally, of their resident embassies, and after an initial grant by Apheda, the Australian labour organization.

### Legal Proceedings

The rule of law and the building of national justice and judicial systems are essential to democracy building, providing the basis for “horizontal accountability,” which democracy theorist Larry Diamond describes as the essential counterpart to the “vertical accountability” represented by the electoral process. As former Premier of China Zhao Ziyang, who spent the last 16 years of his life under house arrest, confided to visiting Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev in 1989, the rule of law has to replace rule by men. But as democracy scholar Thomas Carothers (2003) has written, “Law is not just the sum of courts, legislatures, police, prosecutors, and other formal institutions with some direct connection to law. Law is also a normative system that resides in the minds of the citizens of a society.” It is behavioural, and takes time to evolve in this way.

Some countries, such as China, hold to the “rule by law,” but in a somewhat rigid way. They lack transparency, accountability and the appeal systems that in democratic legal cultures invest parliamentary bodies with law-making prerogatives and the independent judiciary with an ongoing capacity for review and reversal.

In many countries, the legal and judicial communities play important roles in civil society. There are several recent examples of bar associations and even groups of judges taking public stands on issues of governance or corruption, such as in Burma/Myanmar, Lebanon, Pakistan and the Philippines. It can be rewarding, therefore, to develop embassy partnerships and soundings with local bar associations, law faculties and NGOs, such as the Moscow Helsinki Group, in order to support their efforts to improve the functioning of the court system and its capacities for legal aid. Embassies can also help to connect such groups to international norms and to experienced partner institutions in member states of the Community of Democracies.

Corruption issues merit a separate and very important emphasis. The 2010 US National Security Strategy identifies pervasive corruption as a violation of basic human rights. Working with the United Nations, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and other international agencies, members of

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the Community of Democracies are committed to working through their embassies to promote greater transparency in all financial transactions, including those concerning their nationals working for foreign corporations, and especially concerning all flows of development assistance. The rigorous OECD Code of Conduct obliges member states to prosecute nationals who engage in corrupt practices abroad but not all developed countries have done so with consistency and seriousness. Foreign direct investors can play a very important role in contributing capacity building in transparency, accountability, meritocracy and responsible stewardship of the environment and social responsibility by example and by training.

### Security Agencies and Policing

It is commonplace that security is essential to the building of support for democracy and to development, and international agencies such as the Geneva Centre for Democratic Control of Armed Forces play an important developmental and counselling role.

Embassies increasingly pay attention to opportunities to strengthen police training in transitional democracies via closer relations with local authorities. As Gary Haugen and Victor Boutros (2010) have written, “the human rights community must focus on building up the political will and capacity of local law enforcement institutions to bring justice to the world’s poor.”

Even in repressive regimes, it has often been important to maintain productive contacts with security and police agencies. Indeed, elements of military and intelligence services have, on occasion, shown themselves to be among the more moderate components of hardline governments. Embassies that partner with the police agencies for essential matters of cooperation against transnational criminal activity, including anti-terrorism, have found these professional contacts could be engaged to lower the temperature at times of internal political confrontation.

### Political Parties

Obviously, paying attention to political parties and groupings or democratic oppositionists, where they are able to function, is a long-standing core activity of embassies. Repressive regimes resent the cultivation of their political opponents. Even some close authoritarian allies of democracies, such as Singapore and Iran in the 1970s, actively discouraged such contacts. But diplomats who support the right of beleaguered opposition parties to exist and travel outside the country can hardly do objective reporting without contact with political actors.

Most definitions of democracy insist on the existence of a multi-party competitive and open electoral system. Embassies cannot legitimately attempt to influence the electoral success of specific parties. Some of the party-to-party mentoring is technical, and most is developmental without regard to specific policy choices or programs. Some political experiences of democratic parties in donor states have had a profound effect on the development of democratic options elsewhere. It has been

usual for embassies to connect parties or groupings of one democratic tendency or another to similar groupings in their home countries, where parties have frequently formed foundations for the purposes of such outreach. Examples include the German Stiftung, the Swedish Olof Palme Foundation, the US National Democratic Institute (NDI) or International Republican Institute (IRI), or la Fondation Robert Schumann and la Fondation Jean-Jaures in France. Democracies also have multi-party foundations for outreach, such as the Westminster Foundation in the UK, the Netherlands’ Institute for Multiparty Democracy, the National Endowment for Democracy in the US, or the Norwegian Centre for Democracy Support.

### Parliaments and Government Agencies

Whether democracies are heavily presidential or primarily parliamentary as far as the exercise of power is concerned, their democratic bona fides depend on there being competitive and fair elections to office.

*The Handbook of National Legislatures* by M. Steven Fish and Matthew Kroenig (2011) presents a global survey of parliaments. Direct parliament-to-parliament mentoring between democracies and emerging or transitional democracies has been a feature of democracy support for decades. Agencies such as the Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy, the Westminster Foundation, or the Canadian Parliamentary Centre or various other inter-parliamentary assemblies have provided programs for such functions as committee organization, presiding officer responsibilities or independent fiscal and other oversight. Capacity-building support activity continues for such functions as an ombudsman’s office, freedom of information, privacy and various watchdog and regulatory offices and agencies that have been brought into being over the years in the public interest in democracies, even if their independence is sometimes challenged by democratic governments more open in theory than in practice.

Even in circumstances where there are not obvious democratic bona fides, support programs for parliamentary transparency, the audit capacity and technical issues can have an impact on developing the beginnings of democratic capacities and reflexes.

### International NGOs and Organizations

Of all local partnerships for diplomats and embassies, international NGOs are among the most valuable in the complementarity they represent to diplomatic activity and their role and purposes merit great deference. Organizations such as Human Rights Watch, the International Crisis Group, members of the World Movement for Democracy, Amnesty International, the San Egedio Foundation, and developmental NGOs of all kinds such as Oxfam, Médecins Sans Frontières, CARE, Action Contre la Faim, World Vision and, of course, intergovernmental organizations such as United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), the UN World Food Programme, or the International Organization for Migration (IOM) reach segments of society in their

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work and issues close to the ground, which are often out of accredited diplomats' reach. If diplomats and NGOs share values, they do not share roles; sensitivity to this fact is paramount. For the purposes of information exchange and avoidance of duplication, there are, in several capitals, useful mixed donors' groups composed of embassies, NGOs and international organizations.

### **Capacity Building**

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Democracies are easily distinguishable from tyrannies, but their governmental goal is not the pursuit of identity-based objectives of the majority; rather, it should be effective action to the benefit of all citizens, inclusively defined. Successful action relies on hard work over time and on achieving a mix of the right capacities for building achievement and public confidence. The most obvious characteristic of failed and failing states is their "negative capacity," which almost always negates the chances of democracy until stability and progress are restored.

Building democratic capacity requires sound, transparent, accountable and inclusive governmental institutions, as well as properly functioning infrastructure and orderly processes. Assistance and support for democratic governance is pointless without support for economic development and capacities to deliver education, health care and other essential aspects of infrastructure. But many assistance programs over the last decades, in Eastern Europe as well as in developing countries, invested excessively in process and institutions and not enough in civil society, which must form the building blocks of democratic transformation, particularly via the emergence of action groups which for environmental, economic or other specific interests challenge the status quo. Microfinance facilities have particular importance because of the contribution they can make to the capacity for acquiring self-reliance. Connecting such groups to international NGO partners is a major part of democratic capacity-building.

Methods are not self-evident. There is no transferable template for democratic transformation, no one size or style of economic or political model that fits all. The necessity of adaptation to local conditions and deference to local civil society relies on the existence of effective civil society partners and consultation with them. Ultimately, the chances of success will be in their hands and in their collective abilities to encourage a national governance culture that does assume transparency and accountability and responsiveness to the public. These capacity-building issues represent the substance of the work of a myriad of partners — governmental, intergovernmental and non-governmental, in all phases of international cooperation.

An annex is available online, indicating how missions might identify and contact NGOs and development organizations pertinent to capacity-building activities. The list of partners is far from complete; diplomats in the field will know how to identify local NGOs and potential partners from their own NGO community.

The capacity-building activities and issue areas, all interrelated, include several main emphases:

### Anti-poverty and Humanitarian Relief

Microfinance recognizes that the poor people are remarkable reservoirs of energy and knowledge. And while the lack of financial resources is a sign of poverty, today it is also understood as an untapped opportunity to create markets, bring people in from the margins and give them the tools with which to help themselves.

— Kofi Annan, Remarks to Geneva Symposium, 2005

Intergovernmental bodies, such as the Council of Europe, the OAS, international agencies, NGOs and research institutes are working constantly on applications and long-term solutions. Development economics increasingly uses “randomization” to determine the validity of courses of action in different circumstances and locales. The impact of small-scale assistance projects and microcredit initiatives on setting the foundation for start-up economic activity has been promising; but it also benefits the building and spreading of civil society roots and capacity for autonomous self-administration and governance.

The work of organizations such as the World Food Programme and the FAO, and NGOs such as Action Contre la Faim on food security is very germane to democratic capacity, as is work on refugees and migration undertaken by the UNHCR, IOM and many NGOs. Especially important is building the democracy and human rights issues into the development agenda.

### Elections, Electoral Machinery and Public Education

The International Fund for Election Systems, the ODIHR, International IDEA, the United Nations, the Commonwealth of Nations, the European Union and others team up to provide, in many cases, one-stop shopping on election preparation and administration issues. Electoral capacity is more than the technical administration of elections that are free and fair. It requires apt electoral laws, governing all aspects of the electoral and political cycles from expenditure through news presentation. Especially important are workable and accepted provisions for adjudicating disputes and ensuring that post-election outcomes are not winner-take-all, but rather, inclusive.

### Governance and Institution Building

Member country and multilateral programs, activity of the trades union and labour movements, and activity of various coalitions of educational and professional coalitions work in the preparation of inclusive institutional reforms. These can often have an emphasis on functions vital for public confidence building and legitimacy, such as data collection (as in Liberia’s 2008 census, conducted in partnership with

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the UN Development Programme), residential taxation systems that are fair and functional actuarial services. As mentioned under the section on partnerships, the development of offices of ombudsmen, privacy oversight bodies, freedom of information adjudicators, reliable statistical agencies, auditor-generals and a host of regulatory agencies that inform and protect the public interest are increasingly the object of government-to-government assistance programs or administered through international NGOs.

### **Environmental**

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Issues such as deforestation, desertification, drought, extractive industries and hydro dams become political causes with rapidity. The tens of thousands of environmental action groups that have been formed to mobilize opinion against action inimical to local and specific interests have been responsible for the politicization of millions. International partner NGOs have been part and parcel of the progress toward a more sustainable approach to developmental capacity building. As mentioned above, the international private sector also has a role to play.

### **Gender Equality**

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Generations of rural and urban women have been introduced to democratization through groups formed to address the situations and specific interests of women, whose capacity to contribute to development is obviously critical to success, but often underdeveloped. The practical goals of many such groups — material concerns, such as the cost of living — combine with preoccupations about violence to women, a phenomenon on the increase in many countries.

### **Judiciary**

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International NGOs on the rule of law and judicial reform, international bar sections and associations on the role of defenders and legal aid, holding offenders accountable, combatting corruption, are essential for developing capacity for public confidence.

### **Health, Education and Essential Infrastructure**

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International NGOs, international financial institutions (IFIs) such as the World Bank, humanitarian agencies, think tanks, research centres and authoritative policy analysts address the fundamental capacity issues of infrastructure, including sanitation and air quality. The Community of Democracies has placed a special emphasis on democracy education. It is testimony to the power of democratic principle that a resolution of the UN General Assembly, supporting democracy education for all, was adopted in 2012 by a consensus which included, obviously, non-democratic regimes. While democracy education has a classroom and public education function, it also includes the dynamic of education by example and

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experience as a society transits toward inclusive democracy institutionally and via civil society.

### Local, Sub-federal, Ethnic and Tribal Groups

Federal member states of the Community of Democracies, the Forum of Federations and many other organizations and NGOs assist transforming democracies to extend democratic benefits to include more marginal members of society and indigenous peoples, who are often overlooked by elites, as well as addressing the issues of ethnic, tribal and sectarian conflict which sadly still ravage the population in much of the world.

### Human Security, Including Conflict Prevention

Human security networks, the United Nations, international NGOs and foreign policy and security research centres address the fundamentally necessary capacities for security and public safety, without which neither democracy nor development can survive. Early warning systems for mass atrocity activity are increasingly relied upon, requiring diplomats on the ground to do much of the monitoring and reporting.

## **THE POWER OF INDIVIDUALS**

The history of the struggle to realize human rights and to consolidate inclusive and effective democratic governance is a narrative replete with heroes and with countless anonymous individuals. Leaders, martyrs, activists and citizens working below the radar are the ones who own this human story of immutable ideals and the great risks taken in their pursuit.

### **The Activists**

Wherever humans live, there will be notable protagonists for human rights. These include giants such as Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Jr., Nelson Mandela and Miss Suu Kyi, but also many devoted and anonymous activists. In his tribute to Ambassador Mark Palmer in a speech to US Congress, US Congressman Frank Wolf stressed that the “world’s destinies are shaped...by the courage and determination of individual men and women,” rather by “impersonal forces.” The following individuals represent just a sample for the sake of illustration.

### Communicators and Journalists

- Agnieszka Romaszewska-Guzy founded Belsat TV, which has been broadcasting from Poland into Belarus since December 2007 as the only alternative to state-run television. Her parents, Zbigniew (the founder of the

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Warsaw Helsinki Committee) and Zofia were both prisoners of conscience under 1981 martial law in Poland.

- Anna Politkovskaya, Russian journalist and human rights activist, was assassinated by a contract murderer in October 2006, following decades as an investigative reporter, most recently with *Novaya Gazeta* (1999–2006), in which she repeatedly challenged the Putin regime and the virtual Ramzan Kadyrov dictatorship of Chechnya. Threatened with death many times and treated brutally by Russian security forces in Chechnya, Anna represents the hundreds of journalists in the world killed in the line of reporting duty in recent years.
- Bloggers, such as Azerbaijani human rights activists Emin Milli and Rashad Agaadin Ramazanov, who have both been tortured while in police custody and yet continue to oppose the klepto-dictatorship of the Aliyev clan.
- Mona Eltahawy, Egyptian feminist and journalist, who wrote of physical and sexual assaults on her in 2011 post-revolution protests in Tahrir Square.
- Tawakkol Karman, a militant for press freedom who founded Women Journalists Without Chains in Yemen in 2005, and was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2011.
- Samuel Kofi Woods, journalist and human rights activist in Liberia who has documented human rights abuses.
- Yoani Sanchez posted her “Generation Y” blog from Cuba, intrepidly providing an accurate account of the Cuban people.

### Human Rights Defenders

- Nigerian artists have demonstrated a fierce sense of injustice over the years. Playwright (and Nobel Laureate for Literature, 1986) Wole Soyinka was a declared opponent of the dictator General Sami Abacha (1993–1998), as was Highlife and Afrobeat musician Fela Kuti, who died in 1997. Playwright Ken Saro-Wiwa led the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People, an environmental rights group contesting the destruction of fishing beds and wetlands principally by Shell Oil and the Abacha regime. He was hanged by the regime in November 1997, a “man of peace, ideas,” as he wrote in his final statement from the dock of his rigged tribunal. His eldest son, Ken Wiwa, is President Goodluck Jonathan’s senior special assistant on civil society and international media.
- Rami Nakhle, a Syrian dissident, who has created an impromptu network of cyberactivists inside Syria, smuggling in satellites, mobile phones, modems, laptops and cameras to encourage the witnessing of crimes by state security which are uplinked, especially to the Facebook page “Syria Revolution.”

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- Ales Bialiatski, Belarusian political activist, laureate of the 2012 Lech Walesa Award and vice president of the International Federation for Human Rights, founded the Viasna Human Rights Centre in Belarus in 1996, having been for many years an anti-Soviet dissident. The Centre provided financial and legal assistance to political prisoners and their families. He was arrested in 2011 for “tax evasion” and sentenced to four-and-a-half years in prison, and the Centre was closed.
- Ogtay Gulaliyev, a human rights and environmental activist in Azerbaijan, and founder of the Kur Civic Society, was tortured by the regime for defending those affected by oil-industry environmental damage. He was released in June 2012.
- Chen Guangcheng is internationally known for the prominence of his flight from house arrest to the protection of the US Embassy in Beijing and the subsequent negotiation with Chinese authorities permitting him to leave China. For many years prior to that event, he had been a human rights activist especially on behalf of the rights of rural Chinese women and environmental rights. In 2005, he contested the one-child policy in China and was subsequently tried on trumped-up charges and jailed for five years. Chen is representative of many rights-defending activists in China. There were 350 Chinese intellectuals and human rights activists who signed the Charter 2008 document, along with 2010 Nobel prize laureate Liu Xiaobo, who called for political reforms and the end of single-party rule.
- There are also many Chinese human rights defenders in exile — the most prominent of whom is Wei Jingsheng, who was deported to the US in 1997, after spending 18 years in prison. An early contributor to the Freedom Wall in Beijing, Wei is a laureate of the Sakharov and Olof Palme Prizes and many others.
- Born in 1927, Lyudmila Alexeyeva remains an iconic figure among Russian activists, having been a leader in the defence of human rights ever since inaugural demonstrations in Pushkin Square in 1965. A founding member of the Moscow Helsinki Group, she was forced to emigrate in 1977 and returned in 1993. Since 1996, she has been chairperson of the revived Moscow Helsinki Group and an animator of “Strategy 31,” devoted to defending by action Article 31 of the Russian Constitution, guaranteeing freedom of assembly.
- Natalya Estemirova was a human rights monitor in Chechnya for Memorial, the human rights organization. Her criticism of human rights abuse by Chechen militias prompted her abduction and murder in July 2009, illustrating the risks to which dedicated human rights defenders expose themselves everywhere.
- Laura Pollán was a prominent Cuban opposition leader, and with Berta Soler Fernandez founded Las Damas de Blanco, a group made up of the wives and partners of prisoners of conscience, who demand their release. The group was

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founded after the Group of 75 (among them, Pollán's husband) was jailed in 2003, following a peaceful protest march after Sunday Mass (with the attendant support of European diplomats).

- Tek Nath Rizal is a political and human rights activist in Bhutan, who defended the rights of ethnic Nepalese and Nepalese refugees. He was imprisoned in Bhutan from 1989–1999 and has written *Torture, Killing Me Softly*, a memoir about having been in prison a victim of mind control strategy.
- Fathi Terbil represented the families of the 12,000 political prisoners Gadhafi security forces slaughtered in 1996 in Abu Salim prison. He was at the centre of the Benghazi protests that launched the Libyan revolution in 2011 and became the interim government's minister of youth and sports.
- Jenni Williams founded Women of Zimbabwe Arise (Woza) and has been arrested more than 40 times for her work as a human rights defender, and opponent of Mugabe's one-man rule. She received Amnesty International's Ginetta Sagan Fund prize awarded to women working to protect the lives and rights of women and children.
- Oswaldo Payá, another Sakharov laureate, founded the Christian Liberation Movement in Cuba in 1987 and then the Varela Project, which gathered more than 25,000 signatures to claim the rights of freedom of speech and assembly and to oppose one-party rule. He died in controversial circumstances in 2012.
- Min Ko Naing has been a key democracy activist in Burma/Myanmar. He has spent most of the years since 1988 in prison.
- Sakeena Yacoobi is the Director of the Afghan Institute of Learning that, for 20 years, has advocated and provided for girls' schooling, including in underground schools in areas of Taliban occupation.

### Officials and Professionals

- Maria Lourdes Afiuni, a Venezuelan judge defending independence of the judiciary, was arrested in 2009 on charges of corruption after ordering conditional release on bail of a businessman held three years without trial. Her continued incarceration has galvanized support from such as the Episcopal Conference of Venezuela, Human Rights Watch and the European Parliament.
- Abdul Tejan-Cole, human rights lawyer and trial attorney for human rights defenders, is Sierra Leone's former anti-corruption commissioner, a model for other African countries. He now serves as the executive director of the Open Society Initiative for West Africa.
- John Githongo is a former investigative journalist in Kenya who was appointed permanent secretary for governance and ethics in 2003. He uncovered a large-scale fraud involving senior ministers and after death threats, had to go into

exile. He returned to Kenya in 2008 and founded anti-corruption NGO Kenya Ni Yetu (Kenya Is Ours).

- Muhammad Yunus, a Bangladeshi banker, won the Nobel Prize in 2006 for his commitment as an economist to developing facilities for microfinance and microcredit.
- Ela Ramesh Bhatt founded the Self Employed Women’s Association of India, which did landmark work extending microfinance to poorer women entrepreneurs.
- The toll of killings of politically neutral humanitarian workers by jihadists and other extremists has grown. A particularly egregious atrocity was the Badakhshan Massacre in 2010, of a team of professionals from the Nuristan eye camp team.

### The Diplomats

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Since 2011, the Palmer Prize has been awarded to diplomats exhibiting risk-taking initiative on behalf of human rights and democracy development while on assignment, often in stressful conditions. They are exemplary of the many diplomats working to support democracy development and human rights defence anonymously around the world. Recent laureates include:

- Jaroslav Olša, Jr., who served as Czech Ambassador to Zimbabwe from 2000–2006. As an advocate for free and fair elections during the 2002 presidential and 2005 parliamentary elections, he did his best to ensure that a true record of what he observed reached local and other observer missions and the international community. In his exploration of ways to support the Zimbabwean people’s struggle for democracy, he stood behind the rights of the opposition party, MDC, while retaining open communications with the then ruling party, headed by Robert Mugabe, to underline their need to respect democracy and human rights.
- Ernesto Pinto-Bazurco Rittler was, in 1980, *chargé d’affaires* of the Peruvian Embassy in Havana and argued for democracy, non-violence and human rights in Cuba. When thousands of asylum seekers sought refuge in the Peruvian Embassy, Pinto-Bazurco Rittler met with Fidel Castro and refused to hand the asylum seekers over to Cuban authorities. The standoff eventually gained international attention and resulted in the Mariel boatlift, a chaotic five-month period in which more than 125,000 Cubans defected to the United States. He is also lauded for his efforts in promoting human rights in Eastern Europe by the Journalists League Sibiu, Romania. He is a respected legal academic and has been a major contributor to international law in Latin America on the issue of the right to asylum.

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- James McGee, former US Ambassador to Zimbabwe, played a leading role in calling for free and fair elections and speaking out against human rights abuses committed by the Zimbabwean government. McGee worked to draw attention to political violence in Zimbabwe and has led various delegations of diplomats through the country to assess the electoral and post-election environment. Additionally, McGee provided unwavering support for various programs, to foster civic participation, defend human rights and strengthen the electoral process in the highly volatile and challenging environment of Zimbabwe in 2008.
- Ben Rowswell founded the Canadian foreign ministry's democracy unit, in his devotion "to enhancing the legitimacy and effectiveness of democracy support as an essential tool for diplomacy." Rowswell worked for democracy support in Iraq and Afghanistan, and successfully lobbied for the creation of Kabul's Electoral Complaints Commission (the body that adjudicated allegations of fraud during the Afghanistan's 2009 presidential election).
- Caecilia Wijgers is a Dutch diplomat who took multiple initiatives to aid emerging civil society opposition groups in Cuba. Most notably, she helped distribute its publications — many of which are considered "subversive material and enemy propaganda" by the Cuban government — to opposition groups. Wijgers has been repeatedly lauded by numerous Cuban dissidents for her strong commitment to human rights, Internet and media freedom, and democratic reform.
- A special posthumous award was made to Mariusz Handzlik, a Polish diplomat who was a tireless advocate of democratic reform in Central Europe and the Baltic States during his years of diplomatic service. He heavily contributed to the development of civil society whose central role as a principal actor in international relations he worked to valorize.
- US Ambassador J. Christopher Stevens was killed in the US Consulate in Benghazi, Libya in September 2012. He was a determined advocate of human rights and a champion of getting diplomats out onto "the street," where they could connect directly with the people — a gesture which was ultimately his undoing. He began his appointment as Ambassador to Libya in May 2012 after two previous appointments as Special Representative to the Libyan Transitional National Council (TNC) from March to November 2011, and US Deputy Chief of Mission from 2007 to 2009. While serving as Special Representative to the TNC, Stevens acted as the top US envoy to the opposition during the rebel movement. Ambassador Stevens worked tirelessly to assist those working to liberate the people of Libya from Gadhafi's regime. In his address to the UN General Assembly, President Obama commended Stevens for supporting "the birth of a new democracy, as Libyans held elections, and built new institutions, and began to move forward after decades of dictatorship."

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- Stefan Eriksson served as Swedish Ambassador to Belarus from 2008 to 2012. While in Belarus, Ambassador Eriksson worked with civil society and NGOs to bring the repression of the Belarusian government against democracy activists to light. He made it his mission to engage with marginalized communities fighting for access to civil and political rights and used the knowledge to coordinate assistance projects. He attended trials held against intellectuals, such as the president of the Belarusian author’s union and encouraged the community to form networks with activists outside the country. Ambassador Eriksson also showed solidarity with democracy activists protesting the 2010 presidential election and attended the trials of several of the seven presidential candidates arrested after the government’s brutal crackdown on opposition protestors. In 2012, as a result of his work with civil society and democracy activists, Ambassador Eriksson’s credentials were not renewed by the Belarusian authorities, and he was forced to leave his post.

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