The Bidirectional Benefits of Political Party Democracy Promotion: The Case of the UK’s Westminster Foundation for Democracy

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Abstract

Democracy assistance is typically conceptualized as a state-to-state transaction. An established democracy helps an emerging democracy to stabilize because this benefits all actors in the international arena. If the donor is a state, they should not be concerned with the particular political party system that emerges in a recipient country as long as the choice of leaders is that of the people in a fair exercise of their political rights through elections. States have chosen to deliver democracy assistance mostly through party system (all party) aid, but some choose to deliver democracy assistance on a party-to-party basis, which necessarily excludes some viable political parties. This paper asks why one state – the United Kingdom – has chosen both multiparty assistance and the party-to-party route in its democracy promotion organisation, the Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD). Domestic political parties conduct democracy assistance because they wish to spread the ideology of their party platform in a new democracy and because political parties garner significant domestic benefits from this work. This benefit to domestic political parties has not previously been included in analyses of motivation for democracy promotion efforts. Political party democracy promotion gives party leaders firsthand experience in foreign affairs, allows the party to evaluate the political skills of junior members, and enhances the donor party’s credibility in governing and electioneering in their domestic environment. Hence, the benefit of party-to-party democracy assistance is bidirectional, not unidirectional. Evidence for domestic considerations for democracy promotion efforts are demonstrated through an analysis of divergent choices of targets for the various actors in the WFD.
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“The Westminster Foundation for Democracy was founded five years ago this month, and I pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for West Dorset (Sir J. Spicer), who has been the chairman since its inception and has led the organisation superbly. It was essential that we had a foundation in this country, as we were lagging behind our continental friends--particularly Germany--and we still do in terms of the scale of finance. But with no foundation on the Foreign Office vote, we had no means of funding the promotion of the cause of democracy on an all-party basis. We work on an all-party basis, and we are primarily interested in the development of democratic values. However, we like jam on both sides of our bread, and if we can have a centre-right Government in the country concerned, central office is particularly pleased.”

Sir Geoffrey Pattie (Conservative MP - Chertsey and Walton – 12 March 1997)2

1 *The author acknowledges the support of the US-UK Fulbright Commission and the Council for the International Exchange of Scholars for the appointment as Fulbright Distinguished Scholar to the United Kingdom in 2008-2009 when this research was conducted and Temple University’s Summer Research Grant for resources to conduct the analysis. This paper includes data provided by the Westminster Foundation for Democracy but the conclusions drawn are, of course, the author’s own. 
2 Sir Geoffrey Pattie (Conservative MP - Chertsey and Walton)2  
House of Commons Hansard Debates for 12 Mar 1997 (pt 12), column 314
The Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD) is indeed an organization that tries to put jam on both sides of the bread. The United Kingdom created the WFD in 1992 to have a role in the democratic stabilization of post-communist Eastern Europe. The WFD is only one manifestation of the UK’s democracy promotion work abroad. The UK participates in European Union sponsored programs and official foreign policy work. Indeed, the WFD is one of the smaller organizations among foundations created by established democracies for promoting political party development in emerging democracies. However, the WFD became a useful organization for democracy promotion because of its unique approach of combining broad-based civil society assistance with targeted party-to-party assistance. This second mode provided an important feedback loop to the UK’s domestic parties, creating the bidirectional benefits observed in the WFD. This paper makes the case that the benefits accrued to the stakeholders at both ends of the democracy promotion enterprise (donors and targeted recipients) account for the perception that party-to-party work is more effective than broader multi-party work.

This paper analyzes the Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD) from its founding in 1992 to 2008. The UK’s development work began in the 1960s, when the first Ministry of Overseas Development was established. The UK was itself the recipient of foreign aid post-World War II under the Marshall Plan (Bose, Anuradha and Peter Burnell 1991). Prior to 1992, political aid was included with economic and humanitarian aid, if it was conducted at all. The WFD is a government sponsored NGO that administers democratic political aid primarily in Eastern and Southern Europe, former Soviet Republics, and Africa (among other regions) with the intent of insuring that new democracies develop stable party systems and transparent, replicable standards for conducting elections. The justification for creating the WFD and other NGOs like it was to encourage newly democratized states in Central and Eastern Europe to meet the Copenhagen criteria for democratic consolidation needed to join the European Union. New democracies could not take the traditional path toward party development of allowing civil society groups to organize, mature and develop into or link with political parties. They needed to make democratic institutions work as soon as practicable, and for this task, international actors and states gave them the benefit of their political expertise alongside traditional forms of foreign assistance. The political aid took the form of sending political professionals to train the new political party’s operatives, giving political leaders the opportunity to visit other countries as observers of elections and democratic governance, and providing
infrastructure resources for political party organizations and civil society groups in target nations.

Why Promote Democracy?

Starting in the 1970s, authoritarian regimes declined in many places and popular democracies were installed, the “third wave” of democracy (Huntington 1997). Many of these countries had little recent (or even pre-war) experience with a functioning democracy (Lawson, Rommele and Karasimeonov 1999). After security and economic conditions are stabilized, attention turns to the state of civil society. If civil society is weak, then there are poor expectations for the performance of electoral democracy and party systems (Carothers and Carnegie Endowment for International Peace 2006). But, as Carothers makes clear, strengthening civil society on its own is not enough to create a sustainable political system. Civil society groups often do not want to become officeholders and thus part of the state (Carothers and Carnegie Endowment for International Peace 2006; Katz and Mair 1995). Or, civil society groups can act very politically, yet lack accountability for their actions at the ballot box as political parties must (Burnell 2004). So, despite the suspicion associated with political parties in most post-authoritarian democracies (due to their shallow links to the populace and potential links to former authoritarian elites), it is important to establish political parties as standalone democratic political institutions in the view of many experts. Ivan Doherty argues that the international community found the funding of civil society initiatives to be much less controversial than aiding political parties, but also finds that neglecting the development of responsive and transparent governmental institutions undermines the efforts of economic and civil society aid (Doherty 2001). Not only must legitimacy be established, but peaceful transitions of power between adversaries must occur and the citizenry and world community (especially foreign stakeholders) must be convinced that political institutions will follow their own rules and develop predictable political traditions (Santiso 2001).

Gero Erdmann makes the important observation that the traditions of international aid and party system development are not inherently compatible. Indeed, many of the “great” Western party systems on which theories and studies of party systems are developed idealize a party system which is moderate, broad-based, and not quite representative of the society at large (Erdmann 2010a). The aid community would like to see party system-wide democracy
promotion that does not impose outside values on the emerging party system. From the perspective of party scholars though, if viable parties are the goal, then partisan methods should succeed best. Erdmann’s insight that party literature and development literature are mismatched hits the mark. Parties aim to please majorities, or large pluralities. Their goal is implicitly NOT to provide representation to every or even many views in society, and most party systems are representative of the center’s preferences. Hence, a party’s interpretation of success is not at all the same as that of development workers, who believe in creating broadly participatory and representative democracies. Even in the western democracies on which the literature is based, party systems are seen as workable when the number of parties is manageable, say the number of cleavages in society plus one (Lijphart 1999).

Who promotes Democracy?

Many states offer development aid, but fewer offer democracy assistance per se. Japan and France, for example, have been active in administering development aid, but not political aid. Germany and the USA have the oldest and most established partisan foundations. Sweden and the Netherlands have well established institutions to give multiparty, non-partisan political aid. Peter Burnell does not find any clear pattern as to which states choose to engage in political aid or how they select their targets for assistance (Burnell 2000). There are multilateral organizations engaging in similar activities where some states participate and some do not. The most widely cited list of European providers can be found in a report by the Dutch NIMD (van Wersch, Jos and Jeroen de Zeeuw 2005).

The German *stiftungen* (party aligned foundations) have long been regarded as the model of party-based democracy promotion. The *stiftungen*, while officially aligned with domestic German political parties, conduct their democracy promotion programs by establishing offices in major cities in Europe and by employing full time political operatives on the ground. Stefan Mair remarks that the *stiftungen* once employed active party members and former politicians, but changed to use ‘young’ technocrats with no professional German party experience (Mair 2000). While the foundations were funded by the Development Ministry and the Foreign Ministry, the fact that the actual work came out of the political party organizations and not the government was important in their acceptance in the world community (Pinto-Duschinsky 1991). Ann Phillips explains that the *stiftungen* were decentralized, aligned with individual political parties
and meant to work with equivalent sister parties around Europe. Over time, one third of the money spent by the *stiftungen* went toward civil society projects such as youth centres, fishing cooperatives, and trade unions. They also become closely aligned with the party internationals.\(^3\)

When the dictatorships in Spain and Portugal ended in the mid-1970s, Germans received accolades for stabilizing these countries’ return to party democracy, especially in supporting the development of nascent socialist parties in both countries (Biezen 2003). The Ebert foundation, for example, provided training in party organization, campaign techniques, and set up local offices in the countries to provide continuing support. Both countries’ socialist parties were able to win their first elections (Pinto-Duschinsky 1991).

The USA has a large presence in democracy promotion around the world. The United States’ National Endowment for Democracy (NED) was set up parallel to the German *stiftungen* (party foundations) in the early 1980s. The USA had a chequered past of intervening in a number of states, especially in Latin America, more to achieve regime changes favourable to US interests than democratic consolidation (Sussman 2005). The NED, along with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) (Azpuru et al. 2008) provide democracy assistance through the National Democratic Institute (NDI), the International Republican Institute (IRI), the free trade union institute (AFL-CIO) and Center for International Private Enterprise (US Chamber of Commerce) (Pinto-Duschinsky 1991). While nominally connected to the two major US parties, the NDI and IRI are separate from the domestic political party organizations and are fully funded by the American national government (Carothers and Carnegie Endowment for International Peace 2006; Smyth 2001). Domestic American political parties receive no subvention from the state and are officially unconnected with NED’s work. Like the *stiftungen*, the US model of democracy aid involves setting up permanent offices in the target countries where they conduct programs. Further, since the American efforts are literally outside its own domestic parties, they are dependent on professional political consultants, and not elected officials or political party employees, to implement their programs (Scott 1999).

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\(^3\) The Freidrich Ebert Foundation is part of the Socialist International, the Konrad Adenauer Foundation is part of the Christian Democratic International, the Naumann Foundation backs the Liberal International, and the Hanns Seidel Foundation is part of the International Democrat Union (conservative parties).
NED’s first big effort in Europe was in helping Solidarity in Poland in the mid-1980s (Pinto-Duschinsky 1991). Significant efforts by the IRI and the NDI in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) after the Berlin wall fell caught the attention of larger European powers, particularly the British, motivating them to establish their own democracy promotion organizations. Specifically, the US invested in shoring up centre-right parties in Central and Eastern Europe for fear that communist successor parties would monopolize new political structures. The catalyst for the formation of most contemporary European democracy aid programs (beyond Germany) was the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. West Germany moved immediately to incorporate the former East Germany into their state structure (a move not without some criticism even today) making East Germany an exception in the quest to establish new political institutions, political parties and civil society groups (Davidson-Schmich 2006). The rest of Eastern Europe became the concern of other states. Sweden and the United Kingdom developed their democracy promotion programs around this time (van Wersch, Jos and Jeroen de Zeeuw 2005). In 1992, John Major’s Conservative government created the Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD) out of the government’s Foreign Commonwealth Office (FCO). In the same year, Sweden founded the Olaf Palme Institute. Later in the 1990s and continuing to the present day, many more European nations became democracy aid donors including the Netherlands, Spain, Greece and most recently, Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary (Kolodny 2009).

Purpose of the study
Most evaluations of democracy assistance programs assume all the benefits (or lack thereof) accrue to the recipient countries. This model assumes a one-way distribution of assistance from the donor states to a target country (Burnell and Gerrits 2010). My argument is that bidirectional feedback in the case of political parties— where the local party benefits but so does the donor’s political party provides more progress toward political party consolidation in the target nation, better long-term relationships between the two states, and a better record of success.

In this paper, I explore the differences in democracy aid program targets by mode of aid delivery. For the most part, democracy aid foundations in the West address the viability of democratic processes system wide. They explicitly say they are offering assistance for multiple political parties, and for other social or civic actors that are not technically partisan (such as the media,
trade unions, women’s groups and youth organizations) and claim to be agnostic about the outcomes of elections in their target countries. As long as the resulting winner is elected fairly, the government will be legitimate and the donor’s goal will have been achieved. Thomas Carothers labels this approach as ‘developmental’ as opposed to purely ‘political,’ though very often political aid, which is targeted explicitly at elections and the institutions associated with conducting them, is part of an overall program of developmental aid, which includes wider civil society actors (Carothers 2009).

While the WFD supports party system work, the political parties themselves are expected to conduct party-to-party or ‘sister’ party political work. In other words, the international offices of the British parties (located literally within the domestic party offices) work to support and strengthen a particular political party in a foreign country. This approach is highly partisan both in the choice of target countries in which to work and in the nature of the trainings and interventions. Indeed, Carothers explicitly names the British efforts in Serbia in the late 1990s as an ‘assertively political approach’ compared to the more systemic approach ascribed to other European assistance bodies. (Carothers 2009) The WFD’s external reviews both make this claim – that party to party projects are more successful than all-party projects. The WFD’s unique structure allows stakeholders to administer some programs themselves. Ordinarily, the administration of democracy assistance programs is viewed negatively (Carothers and Carnegie Endowment for International Peace 2006; Burnell and Gerrits 2010; Carothers 2009). Scholars find that democracy promotion efforts aimed at political parties in new democracies have not helped institutionalize political parties around civil society cleavages (Hulsey 2010); favor parties that are already or show interest in being internally democratic (Bader 2010); do not assist parties that are too far to the left (O'Donnell, Schmitter and Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars 1986); and favor emerging parties that are compatible with the party-type of the donor countries who do this work (Erdmann 2010b; Spoerri 2010). Overall, democracy promotion does not result in the emergence of a broad, multi-party system that fairly reflects the new democracies’ active or latent civil society cleavages. However, scholars of political parties do find that democracy promotion can help new democracies establish political parties resembling those of the donors (Burnell 2004; Biezen 2003; Gershman 2004; Pridham 1999; Tolstrup 2009).
Carothers’ categories allow me to frame the unique situation of the Westminster Foundation for Democracy in terms of a dichotomy between system-wide or particularly partisan goals. The WFD is an important case because it is the first post-1989 European democracy foundation established, it has one of the largest budgets in Europe for this particular purpose, and the Westminster system has long been regarded as one of the best examples of a stable democratic regime. Further, the architects of the WFD explicitly chose to adopt both models of democracy aid described above in one organization. They do this by separating the project administration between the central administrative offices (referred to as the Foundation programmes) – in effect the government’s NGO – and the international divisions of the UK’s domestic political parties. The main Foundation programmes from 1992 to 2005 were aimed at democracy support by working with parliaments, civil society organizations (especially concerning women and youth), local government bodies, the media (especially in the training of an independent press), trade unions, and election support. Since 2005, the Foundation has concentrated its programmes around strengthening parliamentary institutions and party-to-party work. The Foundation also promotes party system work, with multi-party projects aimed at strengthening the conduct and transparency of elections (Westminster Foundation for Democracy Limited2010b).

Case Study: THE WESTMINSTER FOUNDATION FOR DEMOCRACY Administering the WFD

The Foundation shares its mission with the international offices of the three main and several small, regional British political parties. The funding that comes to the WFD from the Foreign Commonwealth Office is split between Foundation programmes and the political parties’ programmes, but is overseen and accountable through a single Board of Governors. The overall allotment to the WFD was approximately £4.1 million from x to y. Figure 1 shows the growth in overall funding since the founding of the WFC in 1992-93 to 2008-09. The grant has remained at the same level of real pounds since the 2000-01 program year.
Of the total grant amount, about 78 percent is available for direct program expenditures, with the remainder spent on corporate and programme staff costs (within the Foundation and international offices) and party staff salaries. Figure 2 shows how the main WFD programmes have changed emphasis over time. Originally, WFD projects were funded by direct application from NGOs in the target countries requesting cash grants from the British government to support their work on the ground. The Foundation itself did not conduct the projects, but acted as a direct conduit for funding the projects of civil society groups. The political parties, however, often conducted their projects with their own party organization staff or elected officials (whose costs were paid for through WFD). Figure 2 shows that since 2000-01 to the present day, the Foundation changed its focus to work in two primary arenas (political parties and parliaments) and to use British expertise in the form of expanded professional staff at WFD headquarters in London to conduct the programs rather than making grants to local organisations in the recipient countries.
Therefore, Foundation overhead expanded relative to direct program expenditures, mostly in programme staff salaries.

These figures may be misleading as they give the impression that funding for the WFD has been at a constant level. Indeed, that is the case if one only considers the pounds allocated in that year’s value, or the real pound allocation. We must convert these amounts into constant pound allocations adjusted for inflation according to the retail price index in 1993 when the WFD was founded.\(^4\) The data shows that constant expenditures in WFD programs increased steadily from 1993 to 2001, when the programs hit their highest resource level in both real and constant expenditures.

\(^4\) Calculations for inflation were made using the retail price index as calculated by the founders of the website “MeasuringWorth”, economists Lawrence H. Officer (Director of Research) and Samuel H. Williamson (president), accessed at [http://www.measuringworth.com/index.html](http://www.measuringworth.com/index.html).
pounds, as illustrated in Figure 3. Since 2001, program expenditures have seen a steady decline in constant pounds. Spending levels in 2008-09 are equivalent to those in 1999-2000.5

![Figure Three: Project Funding in Real Pounds and Constant (1993) Pounds](image)

The program budget is meant to be split about evenly between the Foundation programmes and the programmes run by the British political parties. However, the Foundation’s civil society programs had more resources than the political party projects in the earlier years. Significantly, this balance changed after 2003 in favor of the parties, as shown in Figure 4, as a result of an external review that found the political party programs to be more effective in achieving their goals than the foundation programs (River Path Associates 2005). The parties continue to be favoured in the proportion of funding received relative to the Foundation.

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5 The WFD staff explained that actual funds administered have been higher in some recent years due to income from third parties. Programme staffs sometimes run externally funded programmes. However, I excluded these programs from my calculations as I was looking to the investment from the state via the Foreign Commonwealth Office rather than the overall funds available.
Figure 5 disaggregates the party expenditures for the three main and collection of smaller British political parties. Within the overall party allocation, funds are divided between the parties according to their relative size, with equal amounts allotted to the two major parties. So, for example in FY 2006-07, the Labour and Conservative parties each were allotted £708,371, the Liberal Democrats received £260,454, and the ‘smaller party’ consortium\textsuperscript{6} received £71,921. The total budgeted for WFD projects was £1.42 million (Westminster Foundation for Democracy Limited\textsuperscript{2008}). Figure 5 shows that the two largest British parties do indeed receive about equal funding for their projects. The Liberal Democrats receive about one-third of the funding of the two major parties, and the smaller parties receive a very small proportion of the funds. It is

\begin{itemize}
\item These are all relatively strong regional parties and include: Democratic Unionist Party (Northern Ireland), Plaid Cymru (Wales), Scottish National Party (Scotland), Social Democratic and Labour Party (Northern Ireland), and the Ulster Unionist Party (Northern Ireland). \textquotedblleft Smaller Parties,	extquotedblright [cited 2010]. Available from http://www.wfd.org/pages/standard.aspx?PageID=16189.
\end{itemize}
important to note that while the combined political party programs are close to or above the funding for Foundation projects, the Foundation has the single largest slate of programs in the period under study, the significance of which will be discussed below.

**Figure Five: Foundation Project Expenditures and Political Party Expenditures by Party, 1993-2008**

*Target Countries and Program Priorities* The WFD establishes a broad agenda for countries as targets of aid, and the political parties are expected to spend roughly 85% of their government funding for work in those countries. The remaining 15% of their budget can be spent in non-priority countries at the discretion of the party office. The WFD began in 1992 by helping to shore up new democracies in East and Central Europe, the central goal being to help these countries meet the Copenhagen Criteria for democratic consolidation necessary for membership in the European Union (EU). EU accession makes countries ineligible for further political aid under WFD auspices. Thus, the major EU expansion in 2004 and then in 2007, took many former political aid targets off the WFD list. At several times in the last decade, serious discussion has ensued about whether to close the WFD if it achieved its initial goals in Europe or
whether to change the nature of its focus to other regions of the world. The latter course has been chosen at each juncture, with a significant overhaul of the target list undertaken each time especially in 2001, 2003, and 2007. The Foreign Commonwealth Office (FCO) recently reviewed the WFD again in 2010, though no specific mention of target countries was in this report (Global Partners & Associates 2010).

The 2001, 2003, and 2007 reviews each critiqued the ineffectiveness and mismanagement of the grant funding side of the Foundation’s programme. There was also consistent criticisms of the personnel in the WFD’s Foundation office, whether working in London or abroad. On the other hand, each of these reviews contained praise for the party-to-party projects. While there are no objective criteria to rate the success in any of the WFD programs, both external groups conducted case studies of countries where WFD party efforts predominated. Sometimes, this included site visits to the target countries by the reviewers. The interview data is the basis for the positive evaluation of the party to party work and the recommendations that the WFD continue and expand their work in this mode of delivery (River Path Associates 2005; Global Partners & Associates 2010). The most recent review in 2010 strongly recommended that the WFD focus predominantly on its parliamentary strengthening programmes and party-to-party work, while noting that the goals of the two efforts were in tension. The parliamentary programme is institutionally focused while the political party work is clearly politically-focused. While Global Partners also tried to measure success in target countries, they acknowledged the inherent difficulty in this enterprise. They did not, however, consider the domestic political interests of any of the donor stakeholders (Global Partners & Associates 2010).

Targets

The WFD provides a natural experiment to test whether the mode of aid delivery produces different outcomes. While it is impossible to evaluate ‘effectiveness’ as many experts have struggled to do (Hulsey 2010; Bader 2010), it is possible to discern whether the Foundation and the political parties differ in their democracy promotion agendas by asking how often they choose to work in the same places. The WFD structure allows the political parties to design their own party-to-party programmes. So, the UK’s domestic party leadership decides where they would like to deploy their party operatives. If the political parties have the same goals as the
state-to-state approach, we should find no substantial difference in the selection of targets from the Foundation side or the political parties. Further, the political parties would not differ from each other in the selection of targets if there were a state-centric view. If we find differences in target selection, we can conclude that the modality of program delivery provides incentives for stakeholders to emphasize different targets with consideration of their own domestic agenda. If the political parties differ from each other, we can conclude that something beyond (or within) the party system itself accounts for the variation.

To answer these questions, I catalogued the targets of WFD projects in each of the delivery forms from 1992 to 2008. Table 1 shows the total number of targets – countries or regions – where WFD projects took place each year. While most of the targets discussed are individual nation-states, at times the WFD sponsored multi-country programmes that were classified under regions, specifically for Central and Eastern Europe, Former Soviet Republics, Former Yugoslav Republics, Africa and the Middle East. In the early years of the WFD, the category Rest of the World (ROW) was used for small projects in one time locations. In coding the data on WFD programs, I have used the country in which the program occurred when possible. I have only resorted to the ‘region’ category when determining the precise location of the project was impossible. Sometimes, regional projects or the ‘International’ category refer to programmes carried out in the United Kingdom, where foreign heads of political groups, usually across a large region, were invited to observe British practices. This is the most appropriate use of the residual category. Overwhelmingly though, countries are identified as the target areas.

Until 2005-06, it is clear that the Foundation funds programmes in more countries than any of their constituent political parties. Given the Foundation’s developmental approach, this makes sense. The Foundation was charged to interact with a wide range of social and political actors. It is important to note though that the Foundation’s list of targets is the starting point for the party sponsors – they are constrained to use 85% of their funds in the target countries set by the Foundation each year, meaning that the remaining 15% can take place in non-Foundation countries. A look at the individual countries targeted by the Foundation is quite revealing (found in Tables 2 to 8). First, as expected, the early Foundation targets were in central and Eastern Europe, in former Soviet republics, with a small presence in Africa. The Central and Eastern European states begin to fall off the Foundation’s list in 2002-03 and disappear completely from
the list by 2005. The number of former Soviet republics on the list grew quickly after 1993, reached its height in 1999 and fell off abruptly in 2005. The new states of the former Yugoslavia began to get Foundation attention in 1994, but then decline from 2005. The Foundation’s efforts in the Middle East were sporadic until 1997, but then increase and remain a contemporary focus of the WFD. There is intermittent involvement in Asia between 1995 and 2004. Perhaps most interesting is the Foundation’s consistent and strong presence in African states. A look at the 2009 list of WFD Programme Countries (Table 9) tells us why: current WFD targets are predominantly in Africa and the Middle East. Indeed, an interesting trend in all the country/sponsor tables is clear – the WFD does tend to work in countries before any of the political parties enter the arena. That is, there may in fact be a logical sequence to identifying and cultivating civil society groups prior to political party involvement. However, it is also clear that there is a regional bias in terms of where the Foundation has worked and the parties have not. For instance, Table 3 shows that the Foundation is the only organisation to have had projects in Uzbekistan and was the major player in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. In Table 5, the Foundation has been the only sponsor in Rwanda and Somalia and the major presence in Cote d’Ivoire, Nigeria and Sudan. Until 2005, the Foundation was the near-exclusive project sponsor in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) which is one of WFD’s current focus regions (Table 6). The Foundation has also been far more interested in projects in Asia than any of the political parties, working exclusively in Bhutan, Burma, Indonesia, Pakistan, Thailand and Tibet, and almost alone in Nepal. Keep in mind that since the Foundation acted as a grant clearinghouse in most of this period, it was much easier for them to have a global reach as they sent cash grants to indigenous grantees, not staff to run partnership programs as the Foundation does since 2005 and as the political parties nearly always have done. The patterns displayed in the data also make two other points clear. First, Foundation work often precedes political party project work in a country. Second, Foundation work is sometimes the end to any further work by any WFD agent. It may be that some target countries cannot sustain a democratization effort at that time, as anticipated in the hypothesis that Foundation programmes look at broader aspects of the political system than just viable political parties. Therefore, failures of Foundation projects can signal to political parties to stay away from these areas as much as Foundation successes can encourage them to expand their efforts.
**Political Party Programs**  
I conducted interviews with political party staff in the international divisions of the Conservative, Labour and Liberal Democrat parties in London in March of 2009. I also conducted research at the Foundation’s offices in London. Due to the WFD structure and procedures, there is consistency in the parties’ programmes in form and content. First, while parties are expected to work in the countries currently on the WFD list (which changes annually, sometimes dramatically), they are not required to have programs in all of the countries. Second, the political parties are expected to engage in ‘direct’ party-to-party work, where the British political party assists its logical counterpart in the recipient country. The three main parties all belong to their relevant party ‘internationals,’ umbrella organizations for political parties of similar philosophies (and often common party ties in the European Parliament) and discussion with the internationals often guides the parties’ decisions about where to work. Indeed, the ‘Europarties’ have had some effect in promoting moderate parties, at the expense of extreme parties, in central and eastern European party systems (Enyedi and Lewis 2006). Third, the parties do not have the autonomy to conduct projects without thorough vetting from the WFD Board of Governors. The parties propose discrete projects with their sister parties in target countries. These proposals are then reviewed for appropriateness, feasibility, and consistency with the goals of the WFD and the Foreign Commonwealth Office (FCO). All party and Foundation programme proposals are also forwarded to the embassies in the target countries for comment, as their activities may be construed as indirectly reflecting the views of the government. Finally, the content of the programmes is similar across parties. This includes training programmes by British party representatives in the target countries, trips to the United Kingdom by stakeholders in the target countries, and conferences or other networking forums either between parties in the same country or between parties of the ‘internationals’ in other countries.

The parties also employ a similar strategy in the use of personnel. Each party has a small staff within its national party organization assigned to WFD programmes whose salaries and

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7 The Conservative Party belongs to the International Democratic Union (IDU), the Labour Party belongs to the Socialist International (SI) and the Liberal Democrats belong to the Liberal International (LI).
8 However, in the FCO’s 2010 evaluation, the reviewers complained that the political parties’ internal decision-making processes were too secretive.
9 This is often the content of the Regional and International programmes – bringing foreign party officials to the UK for ‘good government’ or ‘best campaign practices’ observation trips.
expenses are reimbursed by WFD when engaged in WFD programmes. However, like regular domestic party staff and unlike German and American party foundations, British party international staff is considered core party staff and will be diverted from their international duties when necessary as in the case of a general election. Since this is not a typical occurrence, the international staff spends most of its time on WFD-style work. The important point is that the international staff is housed alongside the domestic party staff. They share conference rooms, kitchen facilities, and presumably news and ideas. This international-national integration also extends to the party representatives and officials who often conduct the trainings and seminars abroad. Normally, each party sends Members of Parliament (MPs), candidates for MP, local council officials, and professional party staff on particular projects abroad. There tends to be careful matching on the part of the parties between the ‘talent’ they have in the UK and the particular needs of the sister party on the ground. Significantly, party representatives who run WFD programs abroad do not get any compensatory fees in addition to their regular salaries. Thus, the budget amounts stated earlier do not adequately reflect the value of the programs offered by the political parties, as the WFD money is only spent on travel expenses, production of materials, staff time on direct project implementation, and rental of venues for events. This is also true of parliamentary and other government staff that support Foundation programmes. The British political parties in effect subsidize the WFD programs with their own privately obtained resources.

*Party Programme Particulars The Conservative Party*

As the founders of the WFD, the Conservative party takes the cause of the WFD to heart. The Conservative party sends staff, Members of Parliament (MPs), MP candidates and political consultants to conduct trainings in target countries. The effect of such programs is dual – both assisting recipient nations and allowing the MPs to gain international exposure and experience. This is an unexpected finding as the ‘developmental’ approach suggests that recipient countries will reap all the benefits of the project. Instead, the Conservatives indicated that WFD programs serve a number of important roles for the domestic Conservative party. Backbenchers\(^\text{10}\), for

\(^{10}\) This term refers to new members of the UK parliament at Westminster who do not have any cabinet level responsibilities as yet and so are expected to service their constituencies and vote as instructed on legislation.
instance, have more time available for WFD missions as they do not have ministerial responsibilities. In this way, WFD projects allow the domestic party to ‘test’ their new MPs’ abilities as public speakers, cultural ambassadors, and potential diplomats. These tests take place outside the domestic spotlight, which is very helpful in the case of party representatives whose performance is found wanting. These efforts make the party worldlier, collectively and individually. The party official I interviewed cited the example of Conservative Party Leader David Cameron’s work early in his career for the WFD in Macedonia. One of the individuals he worked with in Macedonia became the country’s president. Hence, democracy assistance programs enhance the domestic parties, making them more ready to lead when in government.

When parties lead the programs, the focus is aimed more at equivalent counterparts than at larger structural issues in the party system. Conservative MP Gary Streeter explained on the floor of the House of Commons:

“The UK can play an important role by working to develop democratic institutions, whether through the rule of law or by helping political parties to become stronger and make a more coherent case for running their country more appropriately. The work by the Westminster Foundation for Democracy and party-to-party work are incredibly important. I remember attending a conference on democracy in Istanbul about two years ago, and the NGOs and some of the bureaucrats seemed to assume that one could do democracy without politicians. We cannot: we need people who are prepared to put their head above the parapet.”(United Kingdom 2008a)

The idea that democracy needs politicians reflects a far more personal dimension of political party assistance. In the case of the WFD, party officials share both their party and professional expertise with like counterparts.

Tables 2 through 8 show the Conservative party’s selection of target countries. We would expect, and indeed find, that the Conservatives were quite active in all the Central and Eastern European countries alongside all other WFD sponsors. Table 3 shows that the Conservatives were the most active political party in the former Soviet republics from the WFD founding until about 2002, when the Labour party assumed leadership. Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia and Moldova all have political parties which are either full or associate members of the
Conservative Party International, the IDU. We can see in Table 4 that the Conservatives had more programs in Macedonia and Serbia in the 1990s than the other parties individually or combined. In Table 5 we can see that the Conservatives had much less interest in African nations with the exception of perhaps Namibia and Ghana, until recent years and then we see the Conservatives in South Africa, Tanzania, and Kenya. The rest of the world gets very little attention from the Conservatives except in Mongolia, Sri Lanka, and Latin American regional programs. These exceptions which I have noted demonstrate how the Conservative party conducts projects in countries where the Foundation is not or has never been active or where other parties show little interest. Clearly the Conservatives share much of their agenda with the WFD. However, there are also areas where Conservatives go it alone, and this behavior, along with the residual domestic benefits cited above, explain their deviation.

*The Labour Party*

Labour’s programming and staffing patterns closely mirror the Conservatives. Labour party officials select personnel for WFD programmes who match the purpose of the project. For example, a project to strengthen the parliament would be conducted by MPs, a project to strengthen local party accountability would be conducted by local officeholders, and party staffers would be sent to help organize election campaigns. The Labour party also partners with civil society groups, especially trade unions. As a party that itself emerged from trade unions, union viability is understood by the Labour party to be linked to long-term political party viability. This belief is shared by the Socialist International. Labour also has a special interest in working with former communist party members and officials, as their integration into democratic socialism is very important for the prospects of stable democracy and peaceful transitions. Like the Conservatives, Labour officials also cited the importance of contacts made by former party leader Gordon Brown and other government ministers working with the WFD earlier in their careers.

Labour has chosen to work in more countries than any other British party, more even than the Foundation in recent years. They have been the only sponsor to work in Kosovo recently (Table 4), in Botswana (Table 5) and with the Foundation occasionally in Cameroon, where they have had a long presence. They have also been the only political party to sponsor projects in
Palestine (Table 6) and have been the most active party in Latin America, with exclusive engagements in Chile, Dominica, Guyana, and El Salvador (Table 8). Labour has been active in many more places than the Conservatives, partly because their international organization (SI) has more than twice as many member parties as the Conservative international (IDU) - 170 for SI versus 80 for the IDU. Likewise, the number of potential linkage partners for Labour is considerably higher than the other parties, given their stance toward trade unions and former Communist parties. In addition, from 1997 to 2010, Labour was the governing party and this may have encouraged the Labour government to use the WFD more widely to explore the viability of other types of democracy aid. Hugh Bayley, Labour MP and Chairman of the Board of Governors for the WFD from 2005 to 2008 described a successful program in the House of Commons:

Before the elections in Sierra Leone last year, the Westminster Foundation for Democracy was asked by DFID [Department for International Development] to work with each of the political parties in the country to help them present their cases to the electorate in policy, rather than ethnic or tribal, terms. To begin with, we worked with all the parties; towards the end we spent more time working for the four largest parties. We helped them to use techniques common in this country. Pledge cards were produced so that politicians could explain in an emblematic, totemic form to their electorate what they would seek to do if elected. We persuaded the Sierra Leone Broadcasting Service to run an “Any Questions?” programme. In Africa, it is quite a unique idea that members of the public should be able to question members of or candidates for Parliament about what their policies would be and what they had done in the past. It was a tremendous success.(United Kingdom 2008b)

*The Liberal Democrat Party*

Liberal Democrats also send MPs to conduct their WFD programmes, though they have been somewhat more likely to send party staffers, especially from the party’s policy apparatus, mostly due to the nature of the projects pursued. If MPs would be meeting with peers, then they would be sent to conduct trainings and seminars. Because the Liberal Democrats work entirely with sister Liberal parties, they have fewer opportunity targets than the major parties do. Sister
parties must be members of the European Liberal Democrats (ELDR) or of the Liberal International (LI) for the UK Liberal Democrats to design a program for them. The ELDR has 56 member parties, while the LI, which includes parties outside of Europe, has 66. This restriction, along with their smaller budget, leaves them less able to run an extensive array of programs like the Conservatives and Labour. The Liberal Democrats work in the smallest number of target countries and are more focused on particular regions, especially the Balkans and Africa. As Table 2 shows, the Liberal Democrats have had a significant presence in East and Central Europe (consistent with their ideological devotion to the EU and its institutions). They have also worked in former Soviet Republics and the Balkan nations, especially Bosnia and Croatia and have been the only party recently in Turkey. Since many of these nations are either candidates for EU membership or are included in the EU’s Neighbourhood Policy, this is entirely consistent with the Liberal Democrats’ goals in Europe. Their activism in Africa does not fit the EU objectives, and differs substantially from the work of the two larger parties. As Table 5 shows, the Liberal Democrats have been the only or major party project sponsor in Angola, Kenya, Malawi, Senegal, Zambia and Zimbabwe. They have also consistently invested in North Africa, specifically in Egypt and Morocco as shown in Table 6. They have had little sustained interest in Asia.

The current presence of the Liberal Democrats in coalition with the Conservatives in government is unlikely to affect target countries on the Liberal Democrats’ agenda. There are very few instances in Tables 2 through 8 of finding only Conservatives and Liberal Democrats working together. The Liberal Democrats are more likely to be found alongside Labour, or alongside all the party actors in their target countries. They have kept their work more in line with their International organization than with their major party competitors domestically.

**Smaller Parties**

Unlike the other three parties, the residual smaller party category is not a program carried out with great coordination by the smaller parties who comprise it. These parties are mostly smaller regional parties such as the Scottish National Party, Plaid Cymru, and the Ulster Unionists. The contact person for the smaller party program is a Foundation employee. They work in a very small number of countries on quite small grants. Their work has been most
consistent in Albania and they comprise the only political party sponsor in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, and Sudan. They have also participated actively in Georgia, Ukraine, Macedonia and Montenegro.

Discussion

The tables of WFD work and the discussion of the political party actors’ choice make it clear that program targets differ among the stakeholders of the WFD. Foundation work, until recent years, served a wide array of countries at arm’s length. This developmental aid was geared toward creating an independent media and thriving civil society groups in the target countries for the promotion of the interests of women and youth, leading eventually to greater democratic practices. Separately, the political parties have taken ownership of their projects internally, and they have deployed much of their vested, raw talent to the projects. Each of the political parties has a few countries in which it is the only or main WFD sponsor involved, which shows that they are following the lead of their party internationals, or perhaps their own domestic agenda, rather than the work of the other political parties or the WFD.

All the parties commented on the value of having MPs and party officials involved in WFD projects for the party at home. The parties become more internationally focused, more familiar with issues confronting Europe, and end up with MPs and candidates who are better trained to perform executive governance roles. The literature does not mention this effect, focusing almost wholly on recipients and donors as state-to-state actors. While all the party officials quickly noted the domestic benefits of their democracy promotion efforts, they had a harder time articulating the effects of their efforts in recipient countries. While the provision of expertise, technical infrastructure, and dialogue were all mentioned, it was difficult to find any measurable effects on the recipient countries, a common complaint in the literature.

Perhaps one must be in the recipient countries to make such an assessment. Sarah Henderson’s study of democracy aid in Russia offers great insights into the type of problems inherent in otherwise well meaning efforts. In particular, Henderson found that many western-funded NGOs had very good connections in the elite ranks of Russian politics, but poor connections to the masses (Henderson 2002). Anna Matveeva’s study of Balkan and CIS states shows how domestic groups and elites work hard to meet the NGOs ideals in order to secure the
external funding. Democracy assistance programs usually provide well-paid, stable jobs. This also causes problems for the weak states that can’t compete with NGOs for the recruitment of qualified personnel (Matveeva 2008). In a broad discussion of assessment problems, Peter Burnell calls on the community of democracy aid providers to do a much better job of assessing their work. He is not necessarily critical of this work, rather surprised that there should be so little reliable evidence of what works and what does not (Burnell 2008). Future studies of democracy promotion should consider that donors may not expect to realize measurable effects abroad. Instead, they may have strategic domestic political considerations that motivate their democracy promotion programs. This study of the WFD shows that democracy promoters have several alternative audiences to please than the state. There may be international networks of political parties, foreign policy interests linked to the agendas of their domestic parties, and domestic party leaders looking to test the potential of new party officials. Thus, while we may have issues measuring the effects of donor states on target countries, recognizing the bidirectional benefits to donor states will lead to better understanding of the real beneficiaries of democracy promotion.

References


www.clingendael.nl/cscp.


### Table One: Number of WFD Target Areas (Countries/Regions) for Democracy Promotion Projects by Sponsor

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This data is not available from the WFD or other official source. In an email communication to the author, WFD officials reported: “After investigation…we don’t … have this more detailed breakdown of project data by country or region for 2002-03 as all our current Finance team joined after 2002-03 and our systems have been updated since then and the information they contain wasn’t backdated.”
Table Two: Sponsor Presence in Central and Eastern European Region and Countries

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F= Foundation  
S= Smaller Parties  
D= Liberal Democrats  
L= Labour  
C= Conservatives  
P= Political Party of unknown identity for 2002-2003 only due to data limitations.
Table Three: Sponsor Presence in Former Soviet Republics – Region and Countries

| Country       | 92-93 | 93-94 | 94-95 | 95-96 | 96-97 | 97-98 | 98-99 | 99-00 | 00-01 | 01-02 | 02-03 | 03-04 | 04-05 | 05-06 | 06-07 | 07-08 | 08-09 |
|---------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Fmr Sov Region| F     | F     | F     | F     | F     | F     | FD    | FL    | FL    | FL    | FL    | FL    | FL    | FL    | FL    | FL    | FL    |
| Armenia       | F     | F     | F     | C     | F     | FL    | F     | FL    | F     | L     | L     | L     | L     | L     | L     | L     | L     | L     |
| Azerbaijan    | C     | FC    | FC    | FLC   | FC    | FDLC  | F     | FP    | FC    | FC    | C     | L     | L     | L     | L     | L     | L     | L     |
| Belarus       | F     | F     | F     | FC    | FC    | FC    | FC    | FP    | FLC   | DLC   | DLC   | DLC   | DLC   | DLC   | DLC   | DLC   | DLC   | DLC   |
| Georgia       | F     | F     | FC    | F     | C     | F     | FC    | F     | FC    | SC    | SL    | SC    | SL    | DL    | D     | D     | D     | D     |
| Kazakhstan    | F     | F     | C     | F     | F     | F     | F     | F     | F     | DC    | LC    | D     | D     | D     | D     | D     | D     | D     |
| Kurdistan     | FL    | F     | F     | F     | F     | F     | F     | F     | LC    | DC    | D     | D     | D     | D     | D     | D     | D     | D     |
| Kyrgyzstan    | F     | F     | F     | F     | F     | F     | F     | F     | F     | F     | F     | F     | F     | F     | F     | F     | F     | F     |
| Moldova       | F     | C     | FL    | F     | F     | F     | F     | F     | F     | FC    | DC    | LC    | D     | LC    | DLC   | DLC   | DLC   | DLC   |
| N. Caucasus   | F     | F     | F     | F     | F     | F     | F     | F     | F     | F     | F     | F     | F     | F     | F     | F     | F     | F     |
| Russia        | F     | F     | F     | FP    | FL    | FL    | L     | F     | F     | F     | F     | F     | F     | F     | F     | F     | F     | F     |
| Tajikistan    | F     | F     | F     | FP    | F     | F     | F     | F     | F     | F     | F     | F     | F     | F     | F     | F     | F     | F     |
| Ukraine       | F     | FDLC  | FDL   | FD    | PLC   | FC    | FC    | FC    | PLC   | FLC   | PLC   | PLC   | PLC   | PLC   | PLC   | PLC   | PLC   | PLC   |
| Uzbekistan    | F     | F     | F     | F     | F     | F     | F     | F     | F     | F     | F     | F     | F     | F     | F     | F     | F     | F     |

F = Foundation,  S = Smaller Parties,  D = Liberal Democrats,  L = Labour,  C = Conservatives,  P = Political Party of unknown identity for 2002-2003 only due to data limitations.
### Table Four: Sponsor Presence in Balkan Nations (former Yugoslav Republics) and Southeast Europe

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F= Foundation  
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Table Seven: Sponsor Presence in Asian Region, Asian Countries and South Pacific Region and Countries

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Table Eight: Sponsor Presence in Latin America Region and Countries

| Country      | 92-93 | 93-94 | 94-95 | 95-96 | 96-97 | 97-98 | 98-99 | 99-00 | 00-01 | 01-02 | 02-03 | 03-04 | 04-05 | 05-06 | 06-07 | 07-08 | 08-09 |
|--------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| C America    |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| Lat. Amer.   | L     | L     | D     | D     | C     | P     | C     | C     | C     | C     | C     | C     | C     |       |       |       |
| Argentina    | L     |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| Belize       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       | F     |       |       |       |
| Caribbean    | L     | L     | L     | L     | C     | F     | C     | L     | L     | C     | P     | LC    | LC    | LC    | L     | L     | L     |
| Chile        |       |       |       | FL    | F     |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| Columbia     |       |       |       |       |       | F     |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| Cuba         |       |       |       |       |       | F     |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| Dominica     |       | L     | L     |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| Ecuador      |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| El Salvador  |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| Guyana       |       | L     | L     |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| Nicaragua    |       | FL    | L     | FL    | FDL   |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| Peru         |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
| Venezuela    |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |       | F     |       |       |

F= Foundation, S= Smaller Parties, D= Liberal Democrats, L= Labour, C= Conservatives, P= Political Party of unknown identity for 2002-2003 only due to data limitations.
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