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Exporting Elections:

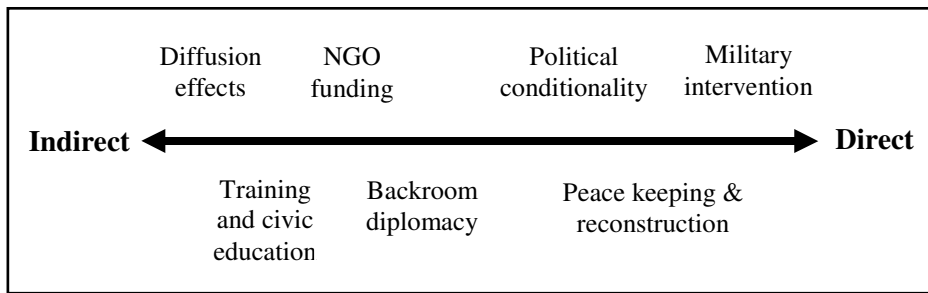
International actors and the era of democratic dependency

International democracy promotion activities did not end with the reintroduction of elections in the early 1990s. Rather, in response to the slow pace of progress on the continent over the next two decades, European and north American donors became increasingly invested in a project to foster the necessary domestic conditions for democratic consolidation. The range of democracy promotion activities ran from more ‘indirect’ processes, such as the provision of training and technical assistance through to much more high-profile and ‘direct’ interventions, such as peacekeeping and military intervention (figure 1). The most ephemeral form of international influence came through the diffusion of political ideas, as African political actors and governments learnt and adapted strategies road-tested in other contexts. The Velvet Revolutions of Eastern Europe had a profound impact on African pro-democracy movements because they demonstrated the potential fragility of one-party states that previously appeared to be unmovable. Although access to international media was limited, urban elites and civil-society groups across the continent were inspired by events in Poland and Hungary and pro-reform religious leaders and political activists drew a direct parallel between the fall of the Ceausescu regime in Rumania and the potential for democratic renewal in Africa.

The diffusion of ideas within Africa also played an important role in shaping transition trajectories. In the immediate post-independence period countries such as Zambia borrowed heavily on the model of a one-party state constructed in Tanzania. In the 1990s, the example of Benin’s successful national conference led to the widespread adoption of the model in Francophone West African states. The proliferation of national conferences had little to do with an attempt to recreate the ‘French’ experience of political transition, and was instead promoted by the rapid dissemination of recordings of early national conferences to a wide range of West African political elites and civil society actors via radio broadcasts and videotapes. However, the transmission of international experience was not always so organic. Following the reintroduction of elections, donors actively engaged in a battle to promote democratic norms and values on the continent through mass civic

education programs, the provision of training for bureaucrats and political leaders, and the funding of vast numbers of NGOs. The growth of democracy promotion activities was not an African phenomenon but rather reflected the response of western donors to end of the Cold War and the opportunity to engage with young multiparty systems in central and eastern Europe following the collapse of the Soviet Union. From a relatively low base in the 1980s, the amount invested by the international community in promoting democratic institutions and norms around the world exploded in the 1990s. According to Thomas Carothers, the democratization industry now spends around \$2 billion a year on funding elections, strengthening parties, deepening institutions, educating voters, and building civil society abroad.

Figure 1. The spectrum of international democracy promotion activities



These more subtle methods of promoting democratic norms and values were employed side-by-side with more direct engagement such as the use of political conditionality for political liberalization on Kenya and Malawi, the deployment of sanctions against Robert Mugabe's government in Zimbabwe, and more recently attempts by the International Criminal Court (ICC) to indict Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir on charges of crimes against humanity. There were fewer examples of the most direct form of engagement to promote democracy - military intervention - although in September 1998 South Africa and Botswana invaded Lesotho in Operation Boleas to put down a suspected coup in an action that was explicitly justified in terms of the need to 'restore democracy and the rule of law.' A more common experience was the use of elections as part of internationally managed conflict resolution programs in countries emerging out of civil-war. In countries such as Angola and the DRC the absence of viable state required donors to engage in an intensely demanding range of democracy promotion activities as they struggled to simultaneously keep the peace, rebuild the state, and organize an electoral system. Precisely because conditions on the ground were so difficult and donors were slow to recognize the importance of building domestic capacity to manage and run elections, many of the gains achieved by states undergoing this mode of transition proved to be domestically unsustainable and reliant on continued technical and financial

assistance from international actors. In a number of post-conflict countries donors thus became locked in to a set of demanding commitments from which they struggled to disengage. African governments may have been reliant on donors for funds to prop up public services since the 1980s, but the 1990s was distinctive for being the era of democratic dependency.

Externally managed transitions

Where stalemate over the direction of political change emerged not between a civilian government and an aspiring opposition, but between a series of armed factions fighting over territory, the transition to multipartyism did not occur through pacting or an external trigger (chapter four), but rather took the form of an externally managed process that was characterized by the pervasive involvement of international actors. The popularity of this third mode of transition out of stalemate in countries such as Liberia and Sierra Leone owed much to the faith of donors in the transformative power of elections. In the 1990s, international mediators invariably advocated that the peace process should be structured around the formation of transitional power-sharing governments that would agree new constitutions and political systems, leading to elections as soon as technically feasible. Within this process, multipartyism came to be seen as central to the resolution of disputes and the holding of a successful election was often identified as the ultimate symbol of a successful transition. Thus the UN Resolution 1885 which extended the mandate in Liberia until September 2010 explicitly identified the holding of elections as the ‘a core benchmark for UNMIL’s future drawdown’.

International actors fetishised elections because they were assumed to have three features that would both the peace building process. First, elections had long since emerged as a key legitimizing feature of any government within the international community and it was therefore assumed that if governments in war-torn countries such as Afghanistan, the DRC, and Iraq were elected they would be more domestically legitimate, and hence stable. Second, it was hoped that elections would give all communities an opportunity to exercise their political rights, and would thus lead to more inclusive political systems more likely to generate representative parliaments. Finally, donors hoped that in the long-term elections would generate more accountable governments and so would give rise to stronger economies that would reduce poverty and so combat some of the drivers of conflict. The UN Secretary General, Ban Ki Moon, epitomized the faith of international actors in the healing power of elections in a speech ahead of the Iraqi elections of March 2010 in which he argued that ‘a credible election process will greatly contribute to national reconciliation and give Iraqi leaders a new impetus to work together in a spirit of national unity to rebuild their country after years of conflict’.

But if the use of elections as a mechanism of conflict resolution rested on a somewhat optimistic interpretation of the power of polls, it was also underpinned by a practical consideration that critics often overlooked. The magic of elections was that they allowed warring parties to commit to a peace process without having to address the intractable question of how power would actually be distributed in the future. In other words, the key advantage of elections was that they deferred the decision of who would become president to a future date. Mediators could thus direct discussions away from issues likely to cause talks to breakdown and onto more technical and hence manageable issues such as the form of electoral system that should be employed. By deferring decisions over the issues that required most trust, international actors could secure a cessation of violence and generate enough breathing space to begin on a process of national reconstruction. But while this strategy brought short term gains, it resulted in elections in which the key participants did not trust each other and had no great commitment to the rules of the democratic game. Furthermore, the deployment of elections as part of the peace building process ignored the potential for electoral processes to be manipulated (chapter six), and the possibility that multipartyism itself could be a trigger of civil conflict (chapter seven). Consequently externally managed transitions proved to be one of the most volatile modes of transition.

In Angola, elections did not contribute to a process of peace-building but simply punctuated an ongoing conflict. During the civil-war that raged from 1975 to 2002 neither José Eduardo dos Santos and the MPLA government, nor Jonas Savimbi and his UNITA rebels were willing to lay down their arms in return for anything less than full executive power. In the 1980s support from America and South Africa for the 'anti-communist' UNITA was offset by Cuban support for the 'communist' MPLA government. Over the next ten years the continued flow of arms sustained the stalemate. However, in the late 1980s the thawing of relations between east and west created an opportunity to negotiate an end to conflict in southern Africa. In 1988, South Africa agreed to cease supporting UNITA and grant independence to Namibia on the condition that Cuba would remove its troops from Angola. However, a ceasefire agreement signed in 1989 quickly fell apart because the two sides could not agree on what would become of Savimbi and his forces in a post-conflict Angola. Dos Santos claimed that the UNITA leader had agreed to go into exile and disband his forces, a claim backed by Zambian leader Kenneth Kaunda but ultimately rejected by Savimbi himself.

The failure of the 1989 agreement made it obvious that a negotiated peace that relied on one of the main protagonists accepting defeat or leaving the country was unlikely to hold; international mediators would instead have to find a mechanism that kept both leaders dreams of executive power alive. Elections were the obvious solution. A peace deal signed in Lisbon and brokered by the Portuguese government committed UNITA and the MPLA to

lay down their arms and support a process of national reconstruction building towards elections and a civilian government. The United Nations launched the United Nations Angola Verification Mission (UNAVEM) to monitor the ceasefire and observe the elections. The strategy worked, but only until polling day. Following the first round of presidential elections in September 1992 Dos Santos emerged as the dominant candidate with 49.6% of the vote to Savimbi's 40.6%. Because no candidate secured more than 50% of the poll, a second round was required. However, Savimbi refused to recognize the result of the first round, claiming that the elections were not free and fair. As tensions rose, clashes between UNITA and the MPLA broke out in the capital, Luanda, and quickly spread throughout the country. Following a series of UNITA military victories in provincial capitals such as Caxito, Huambo, and Ndalatando, it quickly became clear that the disarmament process had been a failure. Savimbi had never committed to the peace process and had retained his forces as an insurance mechanism against the unpredictability of the ballot box. As a result, all of the ingredients of a long and bloody civil-war remained in place. Ultimately, it was only after Savimbi's death in 2002 that Angola was able to find a pathway to peace.

The catastrophic outcome of the externally managed transition in Angola is powerful evidence that even when donors and international agencies became deeply engaged in the transition to multipartyism, domestic factors ultimately determined the fate of the process of democratization. The importance of domestic political will to the success of international interventions is well illustrated by the fate of externally managed transitions in Liberia, where the 1990s did not bring political openings but rather saw renewed conflict and the destruction of what was left of the national infrastructure. From Christmas 1989, when an armed invasion by Charles Taylor's National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) entered the country from Cote d'Ivoire to overthrow the failing and partisan government of Samuel Doe, Liberia experienced one of Africa's most brutal civil-wars that is estimated to have killed on tenth of the population, and turned a further third of the population into refugees. The intensity of domestic suffering, and the potential for the conflict to spread throughout the region, prompted the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to create the ECOWAS Cease-Fire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) in 1990. This first international 'peacekeeping' intervention was a largely Nigerian initiative and struggled to overcome the gulf between its mandate and the reality on the ground; when ECOMOG troops arrived they found that there was no peace to keep and no effective ceasefire to monitor. However, following continued fighting and a series of negotiations, a meeting between rebel leader Charles Taylor and Nigerian president Sani Abacha June 1995 led to the signing of the Abuja Accords in September and the creation of a six member Council of State that effectively operated as a mini government of national unity. Even

then violations of the ceasefire continued until a second round of talks resulted in the Abuja II agreement which scheduled elections for May 1997.

The announcement of the polls triggered a remarkable international effort, beginning with the expansion of the ECOMOG peacekeeping force to 11,000 forces to maintain security during the election campaign. At the same time, USAID and UNDP created works programmes for ex-combatants in a bid to cement the peace process. Furthermore, the entire election was donor-funded: USAID supported the International Foundation for Election Systems and the National Democratic Institute, the Carter Centre to providing technical assistance and election observation, while the United Nations gave logistical support to the Liberian Independent Electoral Commission (IECOM) and provided the basic transportation capacity necessary for elections to take place. As a result of the intense international mobilization, polling day passed largely without incident. The two main candidates, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf and Charles Taylor, even organized rallies in close proximity on the final day of the campaign with little violence. Turnout was impressive with some eighty five percent of registered voters casting their ballots, and the elections produced a clear winner: Taylor secured more than three quarters of the vote and observers unanimously proclaimed that the result was credible. Yet although the elections were a technical success it was not clear that they had offered Liberians a reasonable choice. In part because international mediators were afraid that Taylor might walk away from the peace process, little attempt was made during the preparation for the polls to create a level electoral playing field. Consequently, Taylor enjoyed a significant advantage over his rivals as a result of the territory, equipment, and resources that his army had amassed during the civil-war. Most notably, Taylor's control over short-wave radio meant that he enjoyed a near monopoly over information in rural areas. Furthermore, because many voters feared that Taylor would restart the conflict if defeated, many Liberians felt that the choice they faced was not between Taylor and Johnson-Sirleaf, but between Taylor and a return to war. The bleak reality of elections after war was demonstrated by the rallying cry of Taylor's supporters: He killed my ma, he killed my pa, I'll vote for him.

As president, Taylor's refusal to establish an inclusive and transparent government rapidly set Liberia back on the path to war. Just two years after the polls, Ghana and Nigeria, accused Taylor of supporting the rebel Revolutionary United Front in Sierra Leone. Neighbouring governments in Sierra Leone and Guinea responded to Taylor's subversive activities by supporting rebel groups in Liberia, backing the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD). In early 2003 a second rebel group, the Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL), began making headway in the South of the country, supported by the government of Cote d'Ivoire. As LURD rebels overran parts of the capital Monrovia, Taylor fled into exile in Nigeria. The transfer of power to Taylor's deputy, Moses Blah, enabled a fresh round of negotiations in Ghana between the government and rebels.

International actors again mobilized to support a peace process that once again culminated in elections in 2005. The success of these polls, in contrast to the failed transition in 1997, owed much to the combination of continued international engagement and a transformation of the domestic political environment. In contrast to the 1997 elections, members of the transitional government were prohibited from standing for election. Along with the absence of Taylor, this helped to remove former warlords from the political scene, enabling civilian candidates to take centre stage. Although a number of parties represented former rebel leaders and Global Witness found evidence that Taylor had funded a number of parties in a bid to maintain his influence in Liberian politics through the back-door, men in khaki did not dominate the campaign. Instead, the main choice facing Liberians was between Johnson-Sirleaf and George Weah, a famous football player and one-time FIFA World Footballer of the Year. The comparatively civilian nature of the campaign produced a calmer political atmosphere and freed voters from concerns about an immediate return to war. Although Weah won the first round of voting with twenty eight percent of the vote, Johnson-Sirleaf picked up more support from losing candidates and won the two candidate run-off with almost sixty percent of votes cast. Weah initially alleged electoral fraud after his run-off defeat, sparking clashes between some of his supporters and peacekeepers, but later rescinded the allegations. In power, Sirleaf's government struggled to overcome the legacy of the civil-war and a chronic lack of resources, but in its first term managed to avoid both the resumption of conflict and democratic backsliding, demonstrating the potential for externally managed transitions to create the conditions necessary for domestic actors to lead their countries out of cycles of violence and instability.

The era of democratic dependency

The distinctive feature of the externally managed transitions in Angola, the DRC, Liberia, Mozambique, and Sierra Leone, was the lack of capacity of the state and the resulting inability of domestic actors to sustain the democratization process without external support. Such democratic dependency was not a uniquely African phenomenon. In 1999 the United Nations dispatched international administration missions to the disputed territories of Kosovo and Timor Leste, paving the way for periods of international tutelage. However, in contrast to the situation in Kosovo, the sovereign status of most African states was not in question and so international actors had to be far more careful to be seen to be supporting, rather than leading, the transitional administration. Thus the United Nations continued to stress that its role in Angola was solely 'to observe and verify the elections, not to organize them. The electoral process was organized and directed by the National Electoral Council (NEC), on which all legalized

political parties in Angola were represented.’ Yet on the ground, the sweeping influence of UN and donor representatives at all levels of the political system represented an invasive level of international involvement that often empowered donors to call the shots.

Because the funding and management of the electoral and political process in Liberia depended on the support of the international community, international actors were empowered to make key decisions about the electoral process, both proposing the design of the electoral system itself, and taking the decision that Liberians in refugee camps would have to return home to vote. ECOWAS, the Organization of African Unity and the United Nations were even allowed to appoint a (non-voting) international commissioner to the (IECOM). Following Liberia’s return to civil-war and the subsequent peace process that scheduled fresh elections for 2005, the United Nations readied a 15,000 strong UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) to relieve the embattled ECOWAS troops, while donors’ pledged over \$500 million in aid to help rebuild the country in 2004 alone. Once again, international involvement in the running of elections was extensive, in part because the rushed schedule in 1997 left no time to record the lessons learnt, or to pass them on to local actors. The lack of institutional memory meant that many of the most demanding tasks had to be repeated, with UNMIL again playing a central role in almost all facets of the election, providing essential logistical support, setting up 3,070 polling stations throughout the country and provided training, transportation, and protection for electoral officials. As in 1997, the whole democratic process remained chronically dependent on international support.

Even the Liberian experience pales in comparison with the level of international engagement following the reintroduction of multiparty elections in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) following ‘Africa’s world war’. In the months that followed Laurent Kabila’s overthrow of the Mobutu government in 1997, the DRC had suffered the escalation of a complicated and bloody conflict, as seven neighbouring countries were sucked into a series of interconnected battles on Congolese soil that collectively resulted in over five million deaths. The fighting was only brought to an end following the death of Kabila, his succession by his son Joseph, and a protracted set of negotiations with rebels and neighbouring governments in Washington and South Africa which led to a partial cessation of hostilities. As in Liberia, elections were identified as a key component of the peace process and the formation of a Transitional Government in July 2003 paved the way for elections scheduled for 2006. The vast size of the country, the history of violence, and depth of mistrust between key actors meant that the challenge facing international actors was immense. In the lead up to the polls in 2006 over 16,000 peacekeepers were deployed as part of the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) peacekeeping force costing in excess of \$1 billion a year. By 2007 this had risen further to a total of 18,400 uniformed personal including 2,000 civilian

staff. During the election campaign itself, this was supplemented by a European Union military operation that contributed an additional 1,200 troops to ensure orderly elections. All but \$15 million dollars of electoral costs were met by donors. The EU contributed €149 million Euros, at that point the largest ever European contribution to an election process, and member states provided a further €100 million of bilateral aid during the same period. The EU also played a leading role in deploying hundreds of election observers at a cost of €2 million, along with other observer teams from the African Union and the South African Development Community. Ultimately, Western donors contributed over \$500 million in election related support.

The activities of international actors were co-ordinated through the International Committee In Support of the Transition (CIAT) which included the United States and the European Union. Because CIAT was central to the funding and organization of the electoral process, it was empowered to make a number of important decisions regarding the running of the polls. The central role played by CIAT conferred the impression that rulings by the Electoral Independent Commission simply reflected the will of donors, who were widely seen to favour the victory of the incumbent, Joseph Kabila. When opposition leader Etienne Tshisekedi decided to abandon his promise to boycott the polls, CIAT administrators refused to reopen voter registration for his supporters, claiming that this would have made it impossible to hold the elections on schedule. The decision was interpreted by Tshisekedi supporters as reflecting international sympathy for Kabila. Yet if the deep engagement of international actors raised concerns about their motivations, the presence of international peacekeepers and observers also made possible a credible election. Having won 45% of the ballot in the first round, Kabila narrowly won a run-off against Jean-Pierre Bemba with 58% of the final ballot, a result that no candidate rejected. Although the run-off was closer than many expected, and Bemba questioned the validity of the results, he accepted defeat and agreed to lead the opposition in parliament.

Precisely because donors had sought to construct a democracy in such an inhospitable environment, they struggled to control the path of the transition and to disengage themselves from their commitments in the country. Shortly after the elections, the International Crisis Group warned that continued progress towards democratization was unlikely unless the level of international engagement was maintained. Yet donors proved unable and unwilling to continue to devote such great resources and intense attention to the DRC after the elections. A shift in the focus of foreign donors, epitomised by the dissolution of CIAT soon after the elections, undermined the capacity of the international community to push for the independence of key institutions and to maintain political space in which the opposition could operate. Over the subsequent three years, Kabila's government progressively removed checks and balances on executive power, undermined the independence of the judiciary, and reduced parliament to little more than a

talking shop. The centralization of power around Kabila, and failure to implement a system of decentralization designed to promote a sense of inclusion among country's plethora of ethnic groups, contributed to inter-communal tension and a deteriorating security situation. As the process of democratic consolidation stalled, it became increasingly clear that the DRC's democratic gains were extremely vulnerable in the absence of the continued engagement of the international community.

Of course, most African governments were not as democratically dependent as the extreme cases of the DRC and Liberia, where the absence of an effective state necessitated a form of backdoor international tutelage. Nonetheless, between 1990 and 2010 few African governments ran elections without substantial international support and donors continually played a central role in maintaining the democratic process even in relatively stable countries. In Zambia, the unexpected death of President Levy Mwanawasa in August 2008 prompted the UNDP to establish an Open Trust Fund that raised over \$6 million from donors, enabling the government to hold the necessary presidential by-election. In Tanzania, the Election Support Project 2010 brought together Canada, Denmark, the European Commission, Finland, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, UNDP and the United Kingdom, to distribute \$28 million of international funds to finance a number of programs designed to strengthen the electoral system ahead of general elections. In Malawi, donors provided almost \$30 million to support the electoral process in the three years leading up to polls in 2009. Two decades after the transition to multipartyism, the basic institutions of democracy in Africa remained chronically dependent on continued donor involvement.

Fixing democracy

The difficulty of promoting democracy in countries such as the DRC demonstrated that simply focusing on technical issues such as the structure of the electoral system and training of polling station staff was not sufficient to protect the democratization process. As in Afghanistan and Iraq, the limited success of externally triggered and externally managed transitions from authoritarian rule demonstrated that was far easier to make sure that elections were held than it was to shape their outcomes. In their attempt to fix African political systems, donors worked their way along a chain of potential barriers to political change. When elections failed to result in transfers of power because they were not contested by durable and internally democratic parties donors sought to strength opposition political parties. In turn, where the fragility of electoral and party structures was interpreted as deriving from a lack of understanding of the responsibilities of government and the rights of citizens, donors have engaged in political education and rolled out programs designed to promote adherence to basic human rights and civil liberties.

Throughout the 1990s donors thus expanded the breadth and depth of their democracy promotion activities, which both increased in absolute terms and gained in comparison to other priorities. Azpuru et al estimate that spending on democracy promotion by the United States Agency for International Development rose from \$103 million in 1990 to more than \$1 billion in 2005 which represented an increase from 7.7% to 12.3% of the Agency's budget. By 2010 democracy promotion had become the third largest activity of USAID, topped only by spending targeted on health and economic growth.

The Agency justified the adoption of democracy promotion as a central goal of US foreign policy by stressing the intrinsic value of democracy and by making the case that 'promoting democracy serves vital US national interests' because 'democratic governments are more likely to advocate and observe international laws and to experience the kind of long-term stability which leads to sustained development, economic growth, and international trade.' In 1994 the growing salience of democracy promotion within USAID activities led to the creation of the Centre for Democracy and Governance which underwent grew exponentially over the next five years and by 2009 had an annual budget in excess of \$420 million. Although much of this increase in expenditure was devoted to a relatively small number of countries where America was heavily invested, most notably Afghanistan and Iraq, the US supported democracy promotion activities in a remarkably broad range of countries. In 1983 the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) was founded as a semi-autonomous body of the American government tasked with 'supporting freedom around the world' and by 2010 was making around 1,000 grants to more than 90 different countries every year.

The escalation of donor funded democracy promotion activities was not limited to the United States. Member states of the European Union collectively spent around €2,500 million per year on democracy assistance in 2007, and committed a further €150 million a year through the European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) of the European Commission (EC). In 2008 democracy promotion represented around 8% of the aid budget of the United Kingdom and one-tenth of aid spending in Germany and the Netherlands. As in America, there was a proliferation of democracy assistance organizations. In the United Kingdom, the Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD) was established in 1992 as a direct response to the aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet Union and the need to support democratization efforts in central and eastern Europe. Following its formation, the Foundation emerged as the British equivalent of the NED, funded by an annual £4.1 million grant from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO). In comparison to their American counterparts, European actors justified democracy promotion in terms of its impact on the freedom and standard of living of African votes. According to the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) 'Freedom of expression, political diversity and freedom of assembly give poor people a better chance of escaping poverty'

which is why the Agency was proud to announce that ‘in 2008, 84 per cent of SIDA’s support went to efforts that are directly or indirectly to do with democracy and human rights.’

While many of the projects funded by donors were of a technical nature and were directly requested by African governments, at times donor frustration with the slow pace of change led them into activities that crossed the boundary between supporting projects identified by domestic political actors and a far more problematic project of political and social engineering. We have already seen how intensive donor engagement in post-conflict countries resulted in the emergence of a system of international tutelage in which the inequality between donors and domestic actors in terms of financial and technical resources often empowered international actors to call the shots. In a broader set of countries the combination of donors deep economic engagement, their ability to work through a range of externally funded NGOs (chapter two), and the growing recognition within democracy promotion circles that the barriers to democratization lay deep within African political and social systems, led to increasingly invasive donor engagement in a desperate attempt to make democracy work. Over the first two decades of multiparty competition, donors’ efforts to mold African states in their own image led them to undertake activities that they would not have permitted in their own countries.

This phenomenon is well illustrated by the evolution of the role played by donors and NGOs with respect to voter education and political parties. Following the reintroduction donors had rolled out civic education programs across Africa to ensure that voters understood their rights and the workings on the electoral system. Yet the desire to transform African societies to encourage voters to reject corrupt and irresponsible leadership resulted in mission creep; by the mid 2000s, donors were not simply providing information, but were rather engaged in a battle for the hearts and minds of African voters. In Sierra Leone, donor funded programs to support post-conflict reconstruction and the emergence of a consolidated democracy directly targeted the transformation of the country’s political culture. As youth had been so prominently involved in the civil-war, donors were particularly keen to shape the content of the school curriculum and radio shows aimed at children in order to promote a more rights based political culture. Radio offered a new opportunity to reach a mass constituency, as the end of the civil-war and the creation of an Independent Media Commission (IMC) had resulted in an increase in the number of radio stations from 7 in 2000 to 25 in 2005. Spotting an opportunity, a number of international organizations including the United Nations Mission to Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) and NGOs offered to fund the running and staff costs of radio stations in return for the right to broadcast their messages. Plan International, an NGO dedicated to promoting the rights and interests of the world’s children, funded two programs, Pikin dem Voice and Children’s

Concern. The main aim of the charity was to disseminate information each week regarding different articles the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Programmes thus covered topics such as the need to avoid early marriage and to respect gender equality. While the intention behind such programs was laudable, Gillian Macfarlane's finds that that Plan International's aim of promoting respect for the Rights of the Child in Sierra Leone often clashed with local everyday practice. The attempt to push a clear-cut 'right' answer to complex issues such as early marriage and child labor involved an implicit criticism of local norms and failed to reflect the everyday lived experience of the presenters and audience. While the programs met with relatively little success in terms of the transformation of social attitudes, they raise questions over when political education turns into cultural imperialism. The tension that emerged in Sierra Leone between the values of local communities and the promotion of a rights based political culture by NGOs and donors highlights the potential for political education programs to fall into the trap of seeking to empowering people to make free choices about their government and life paths by imposing a particular world view from outside.

In a parallel development, donors became increasingly involved in areas of the political system previously considered to be out of bounds, most notably by funding political parties. Parties are tasked with representing the will of the people and so play a central role in any system of representative democracy. If parties fail to aggregate public opinion the translation of public preferences into public policy is likely to be weak. Furthermore, if opposition parties are not durable and effective, scrutiny of government policies and activities is likely to be limited. In Africa, the rapid transition to multipartyism in the early 1990s often resulted in the emergence weak and unstable party systems, especially where the prolonged absence of political parties meant that there were few pre-existing political structures on which to draw (chapter six). In post-conflict contexts, the challenge was somewhat different; to transform violent rebel movements into democratic political parties. Although donors have been constantly concerned about the weak state of opposition parties, they have traditionally shied away from directly funding political parties, rightly fearing that engagement of this issue would be interpreted as partisan political activity and a violation of sovereignty. Consequently, party support has historically been largely driven by NGOs and western political parties, rather than donor governments. However, a growing recognition that parties represented 'the weakest link' in African democracies gradually encouraged donors to engage with African parties. An early example of this trend was the strong donor support offered to the Resistência Nacional Moçambicana (RENAMO) rebel movement after the reintroduction of multiparty elections in Mozambique. Following a prolonged civil-war in which RENAMO sought to overthrow the Liberation Front of Mozambique (FRELIMO) government, resulting in over 900,000 deaths, a peace accord in

1992 paved the way for elections in 1994 under UN stewardship. The elections posed a significant challenge for RENAMO. The rebels faced the standard challenges of disarming, integrating their forces into the regular Mozambican army, and contending with disputes between moderates and hardliners over whether to contest elections at all. Meeting these difficulties was all the more problematic because, as Manning's work reveals, RENAMO had no real political or administrative framework in Mozambique before 1985. At the same time, RENAMO's deep links to the South African government, who had funded it in opposition to FRELIMO's communist stance during the civil-war, meant that the party had to overcome the impression that it was an apartheid stooge.

Donors concern to ensure that Mozambique developed a viable opposition party that could act as a check the power of FRELIMO resulted in an unprecedented level of engagement to support RENAMO, including the creation of a trust-fund for the party of \$18 million. When RENAMO threatened to pull out of the process in October alleging fraud, donors were persuaded to add an extra \$1 million to the fund, effectively bribing RENAMO not to sabotage the polls. But donors were not just interested in funding RENAMO – they also had a clear image in mind of the sort of party that they wanted RENAMO to be. Consequently, donors and democracy promotion agencies set about providing training to rebel leaders in the formation and running of a democratic political party. Using the vast amounts of money they were channelling into RENAMO's coffers as leverage, donors encouraged party leaders to establish interanlly democratic structures and to focus on substantive issues rather than past grievances or communal politics during the election campaign. Although the impact of international engagement on internal party structures proved largely ineffective, foreign funding was critical to the party's emergence as a credible opposition. Somewhat against the odds, RENAMO took 112 of the 250 available seats in the founding parliamentary election of 1994, giving it a sizeable presence in the legislature and enabling it to block changes to the constitutional. Donors thus played a central role not just in rebuilding political systems, but in shaping the nature of the party system, the outcome of the elections, and the composition of the legislature. The party also performed well in 1999, when it won 117 seats, and in 2004, when it retained 90 seats as part of the Mozambican National Resistance-Electoral Union. However, waning donor engagement and FRELIMO's ability to manipulate the advantages of incumbency has resulted in the slow emergence of one-party dominance; RENAMO only secured 51 seats in the legislative election of 2009, while FRELIMO candidate Armando Guebuza scooped three quarters of the presidential vote.

The extensive engagement of international donors with RENAMO was somewhat exceptional at the time, but mounting frustration with the weakness of party structures across the continent and a recent recognition that

‘there is only so much you can do with workshops’ donors are now embarking on strategies that may result in far more invasive engagement with parties on a consistent basis. In 2009, the UK, Denmark, Holland, Ireland, Sweden and Norway joined forces as part of an experimental Deepening Democracy Program to give direct grants to political parties in Uganda in order to support them to prepare for multiparty general elections. Under the scheme, parties were able to access support to fund a specific set of activities up to the value of their current income (capped at \$200,000) so long as they met a set of criteria laid down by donors. These criteria are broadly designed to ensure that parties are capable of monitoring and using the funds effectively and the relevant have been keen to stress that their concern is to support parties to establish more robust internal organizations and not to encourage parties to adopt particular policies. However, party leaders are keenly aware that certain issues are of particular concern to donors and that resources are more likely to be forthcoming if they adopt the language and priorities of their funders. As cash strapped Ugandan parties come to rely on donors to fund half of their income, donors are likely to develop as much influence over parties as they have previously been able to exert over other aspects of the political system. At the same time, the expansion of efforts by donors to strengthen opposition political parties can only make it harder for international actors to avoid becoming seen as partisan actors with a specific political agenda. In other words, the expansion of donors’ efforts to fix African democracy has led them into areas where they risk undermining their own legitimacy . Indeed, direct funding by foreign governments for political parties is a development that most donors would not tolerate in their own countries, where foreign donations are typically prohibited and illustrates the double-standards that have emerged in international interaction with Africa and the insidious way in which donors have become engaged in activities in all areas of African political life.

The inconsistencies of the international community

It is somewhat paradoxical that during the decade when donors massively increased their rhetorical and financial commitment to democracy promotion they also continued to be willing to trade democracy off against other priorities. For all the resources invested by the likes of USAID, DfID, and SIDA, the overall impact of the ‘international community’ on the direction of political change in Africa was not unlike a car being driven by multiple drivers all with their own wheel. When all actors pointed in the same direction, real progress was possible. But more often than not different actors identified contradictory destinations, cancelling out any positive effect of democracy promotion activity and leaving the fate of democracy to be decided by domestic forces. Understanding why this was so requires us to

acknowledge that there is no such thing as a coherent ‘international community’; rather, there are a set of competing actors with diverse interests and the overall impact of the international realm on the development of African democracy is a function of their messy interaction. References to international actors may refer to one of at least four types of players. Most obviously, there are the group of internationally recognized states that variously act as donors and debtors, rivals and peacemakers. Different assemblages of these states into various international and regional bodies such as the European Union and United Nations constitute a second supranational level of engagement. While international responses to African economic crises are often mediated through the IMF and World Bank, response to political crises is often coordinated through the United Nations and, more recently, the International Criminal Court (ICC) and the African Union (AU). Non-state actors including the NGOs and democracy promotion organizations discussed above also play a central role in shaping Africa’s relationship with the outside world, and although the aims of these organizations are often hard to distinguish from the states that fund much of their activities, bodies such as OXFAM and Christian Aid have distinctive aims and methods and thus represent a third type of actor. Finally, multi-national companies deserve to be recognized as powerful players in their own right. Although the level of state support and direction for major companies means that in practice the distinction between states and corporations can be hard to sustain, especially in the case of largest Chinese firms, as trade becomes more important than aid companies such as Exxon Mobil and the Chinese National Petroleum are increasingly shaping the resources available to African governments. For example, in 2010 British Aerospace paid a fine of \$450 million to settle cases brought by the British Serious Fraud Office and the US Department of Justice. Although the company took the option of admitting a procedural fault, accepting that it had ‘failed to accurately record’ payments, anti-corruption campaigners alleged that it routinely used bribery to secure contracts in a range of countries including Chile, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, and Tanzania, and in doing so channeled funds into the pockets of irresponsible and often undemocratic leaders.

It was precisely this complex mess of international actors, all complete with their own priorities and modus operandi, which created the wriggle-room that African leaders required to be able to control the pace of reform. Even if we restrict our analyses to states, the picture is remarkably complicated. The attention and resources of former colonial powers, most notably France and the United Kingdom, continued to be directed more by their historical connections of guilt, political loyalty, and economic interaction, than by a rational evaluation of the need on the ground. France, in particular, established deep ties to ruling political elites in countries in its Francophone sphere of influence that often enabled authoritarian leaders to cling onto power, as in Togo (chapter four). France’s willingness to put

loyalty before human-rights was most shockingly demonstrated in the period around the Rwanda genocide, during which the French government helped to prop-up the failing Habyarimana regime, delivered large shipments of weapons to the army, engaged in frontline combat against Kagame's Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) rebels, and trained many of the militias that would later carry out the killing. When the atrocities started, the French dithered and missed crucial opportunities to halt the violence, in large part because they were concerned to protect their allies and to prevent their capture by the RPF. In the 1990s other donors similarly sought to use their presence in Africa to promote core national interests. As Iran and Saudi Arabia competed to promote the spread of their favored interpretations of Islam in the 1990s, their willingness to provide NGOs and financial assistance to fund religious activities became increasingly significant in African states with large Muslim populations such as Nigeria, Senegal, and Sudan. Similarly, Japan's growing engagement in development work over the past two decades has been motivated in part by a desire to project international influence, and check the rising profile of emerging Asian powers such as China and India.

Even when donors set out to prioritize development and democracy, African leaders proved able to manipulate the complex bundle of motivations shaping international engagement to defer political liberalization. In Uganda, the democratization process stalled in the 1990s in part because donors faced two powerful incentives not to force President Museveni to reintroduce multiparty elections. Most obviously, donors feared that elections could destabilize the country and result in a slide back into the chaos of the Idi Amin era. Hence, the Danish government argued that a more gradual schedule of reform was necessary given Uganda's history of conflict. However, it was just as significant that a number of powerful development agencies were keen to do nothing that would jeopardize good relations with Museveni because he offered them a free-hand with regards to development policy. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, European and North American donors had grown increasingly frustrated at the reluctance of African governments to fully implement economic reform and development packages. By presenting Uganda as a pliant guinea pig, Museveni offered donors a chance to prove that their policies would work if only they were implemented effectively. He thus publicly supported far-reaching economic reforms and accepted the need to provide political leadership in the fight against HIV/AIDS. Initial results were so positive that the Ugandan case was rapidly taken up by numerous embattled development agencies desperate for a success story. Economic growth was strong throughout the 1990s, while Uganda recorded remarkable (although later contested) reductions in HIV prevalence from a high of around 15% in 1991 to around 5% in 2001.

Although the United States pushed for a more aggressive strategy of democracy promotion in the mid 1990s, European development agencies were keen to avoid disrupting their positive relationship with the Ugandan

government and lobbied for criticism to be communicated behind closed doors. Despite having deliberately triggered multi-party elections in nearby Kenya, European officials publicly argued that it was for the Ugandan people, and not the donor community, to decide the country's political system. As a result of donor dithering, Museveni was able to continue to access considerable international financial assistance while simultaneously deferring political liberalization. Prior to the reintroduction of multi-party politics in 2005, Uganda received more American aid money per year than Nigeria, despite having only one-fifth the population.

When multiparty politics was finally introduced Museveni's reluctance to allow for a level playing field finally broke the cosy alliance between donors and the National Resistance Movement (NRM) government. In response to a period of democratic backsliding in which Museveni changed the constitution to allow himself a third-term and opposition candidates were harassed in the run-up to the 2006 presidential election, Britain cancelled £5 million worth of aid. Recognizing that the credit he had gained as a good development partner was running out, Museveni looked for another strategy that might blunt international criticism of his regime's stalled democratization program. Events in Somalia quickly presented Museveni with an ideal opportunity to once again make his regime indispensable to the donors. Following the Ethiopian invasion of Somalia and the defeat of the Union of Islamic Courts (UIC), the United States became increasingly worried about that the breakdown of order would lead to the spread of radical Islamic groups within the country. However, few countries were prepared to support a call for troops for the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), which came into being on 17 January 2007. By providing 2,500 peacekeeping troops, nearly half of the 5,100 total, Museveni positioned himself as an important American ally in the war-on-terror. The failure of AMISOM to secure its original target of 8,000 troops left international efforts in Somalia heavily reliant on Ugandan support, rendering donors unwilling to censure Museveni for the slow pace of reform. Once again, the tail wagged the dog.

The disagreement between development agencies and foreign affairs ministries over how to deal with Uganda highlights the way in which the inconstancies of the international community have been manifest not just between states, but can be identified within the approach of individual states. Perhaps the strongest example of this form of internal inconsistency was the tension in American foreign policy between the focus of USAID on democracy promotion and the funds spent by the US government on military training and anti-terrorism following the terrorist attacks on September 11th 2001. The vulnerability of American targets in East Africa had already been demonstrated by the US Embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998 in which hundreds of people lost their lives and in the wake of 9/11 the Bush administration became increasingly concerned that Somalia could become a breeding ground for al-Qaeda. In response, America encouraged African

government to introduce anti-terror legislation that incumbents often manipulated to target minorities and to roll-back human rights legislation. Between 2001 and 2010, Amnesty International highlighted major problems with the abuse of anti-terror legislation in Kenya, Ethiopia, Mauritius, and Uganda.

At the same time as USAID was spending hundreds of millions of dollars supporting good governance programs, the US government was simultaneously pumping funding for military training and anti-terrorist activities into some of the continent's least democratic regimes (table 1). Although much of this expenditure was aimed at increasing the professionalism of the security services, it also increased the capacity of a set of authoritarian governments, and served as a signal that a lack of democracy was not a barrier to profitable relations with the United States. Furthermore, in 2007, the US Department of State authorized the export of defense articles and services worth \$25,223,900 to Ethiopia and \$55,317,316 to Nigeria, despite the fact that both regimes had inflicted well documented human-rights abuses on their citizens. American policy was thus marked by a bizarre schizophrenia in which different branches of the government simultaneously pushed their own agenda, frequently working against each other.

Table 1. American military expenditure 2007 (\$) thousands

	FH Rating	International Military and Education Training	Military Financing	Anti- Terrorism	Total
Angola	NF	289	-	4,850	5139
Chad	NF	392	-	795	1187
DRC	NF	-	263	1,375	1638
Djibouti	PF	3,800	345	356	4501
Ethiopia	PF	1,900	472	1,150	3522
Ghana	F	500	643	38	1181
Nigeria	PF	1000	696	1,862	3558
Sudan	NF	96	3,725	84,000	87821
Tanzania	PF	66	-	2,302	2368

Although the role of African states in democracy promotion is often neglected in favor of a focus on international actors, they have also contributed to the inconsistency of the international community. Despite its own democratic deficit, Nigeria has demonstrated a capacity to lead peacekeeping and democracy promotion efforts throughout West Africa through the Economic Community Of West African States (ECOWAS), as demonstrated by its constructive role in Liberia and Sierra Leone. Similarly, South Africa has played an important role in brokering peace negotiations in Burundi and in shaping outcomes throughout southern Africa. African governments have also been willing to commit themselves on paper to the promotion of human rights and democracy. In 2001, the Organization for African Unity (OAU) established the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) which established the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) in 2003. Through the APRM member states committed to a self-monitoring mechanism in which states would review each other's progress with regards to political, economic, and corporate governance. A similar concern for human-rights made it into the founding charter of the African Union, which replaced the OAU in 2005. Going far beyond the commitments undertaken by members of the European Union and United Nations, the Charter asserted the right of the AU to 'intervene in a Member State pursuant to a decision of the Assembly in respect of grave circumstances, namely war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity'.

Yet the basic political will required for either the peer-review process or the commitment to humanitarian intervention to have any impact on the quality of democracy on the continent has been sorely lacking. Despite all the fine words, a host of leaders proved to be unwilling to sanction authoritarian neighbors within the African Union because they are afraid of establishing precedents that they might later be held to. The case of Zimbabwe is perhaps the clearest example of the reluctance of where even democratically elected

African governments to sanction authoritarian neighbors has undermined the capacity of other donors to effect change. As early as 2001 the increasingly authoritarian bent of Robert Mugabe's government resulted in the cessation of World Bank and the IMF support. In March 2002, Mugabe's re-election in flawed presidential polls led to Zimbabwe's suspension from the Commonwealth, which was upgraded to an indefinite suspension in December 2003. At the same time, George Bush introduced Executive Order 13288 imposing sanctions 'against specifically identified individuals and entities in Zimbabwe'. The list of those covered by sanctions was later extended in 2005 following an intensification of attacks on the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) opposition which inspired the United States to brand Mugabe's regime as one of the world's six 'outposts of tyranny'.

The desire of America and Britain to remove Mugabe from power made them reluctant to support a power-sharing deal, despite having supported the same strategy in Kenya. Seeking to strengthen the bargaining position of the MDC, the US introduced a resolution at the United Nations to establish an arms embargo on Zimbabwe. However, regional governments were reluctant to follow America's lead. Debates at the UN revealed a split between the United States, backed by Britain, France, Belgium, Burkina Faso, Costa Rica, Croatia, Italy and Panama, and a range of governments that spoke against the motion including China, Russia, South Africa, Tanzania and Angola. The economic and strategic significance of South Africa gave added weight to the mediating role of regional players, while Mugabe's ability to manipulate British intervention to his own advantage encouraged western governments to take a back-seat to Southern African leaders in negotiations (chapter eight). Although Zambian president Levy Mwanawasa and Botswanan President Ian Khama spoke out against the ZANU-PF regime, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) refused to back regime change. The position of the SADC owed much to the 'quiet diplomacy' advocated by South African president Thabo Mbeki, and his commitment to looking for 'African solutions for African problems' in the spirit of the African renaissance. Mbeki's reluctance to be seen to be doing the dirty work of the west by forcing a 'liberation hero' from power meant relatively little pressure was actually brought to bear on the ZANU-PF regime, while South Africa actively resisted British attempts to extend Commonwealth sanctions in September 2002. Following the flawed 2008 polls, Mbeki once again pursued quiet diplomacy, despite the absence of any real concessions from ZANU-PF, ultimately securing a dysfunctional power-sharing agreement that enabled Mugabe to retain the presidency. As so often, the inconsistency of the international community had created the necessary wriggle room for an authoritarian incumbent to retain power.

Enter the dragon

In the 1990s the emergence of China as a global superpower radically altered the complexion of the international community. The rapid escalation of Chinese engagement in Africa was driven by a desire to broadcast power on a global basis and a need for raw materials and new markets. In October 2000, China made a clear statement of its intent to systematically develop its relationship with African countries when it held the first Ministerial Conference of the Forum of China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), which brought together representatives of 44 African countries and 17 regional and international organizations in Beijing to establish ‘a new long-term and stable partnership based on equality.’ The speed with which this ‘partnership’ developed was remarkable. By 2003, Chinese arms sales to Africa were worth almost \$1.5 billion, more than any European country. By 2006, Chinese trade had surpassed \$100 billion, eclipsing all competitors bar America. By 2008, there were estimated to be almost 1,000 Chinese state-owned firms operating in Africa, while the number of Chinese nationals living in countries such as Angola, Nigeria, South Africa, and Zambia, was thought to be excess of 100,000.

The re-emergence of China as a major player on the continent inspired fears among the democracy promotion community of a return to the divisive bi-polarity of the Cold War which saw democracy sacrificed on the altar of geo-strategic concerns. The Chinese government’s self-proclaimed intention to develop ‘unconditional’ relationships with African states exacerbated these fears. Moreover, because China’s rise to prominence demonstrated the viability of a model of civil-authoritarian rule that resonated with many African governments, it raised the possibility that African states could seek to follow a path of political and economic development radically opposed to that advocated by western donors. Moreover, by emphasising China’s experience as a colonized nation the Chinese government presented itself as a more understanding and suitable foreign partner for countries in Africa; one willing to offer brotherly solidarity rather than the finger wagging paternalism of the west.

Yet this picture was slightly misleading in at least two respects. First, China’s emergence as one of the world’s most powerful economies made it increasingly difficult to sustain the notion that China and African states were partners engaging on equal terms. By the mid-2000s, China was no less dominant in its relations with African governments than America, and concerns about the impact of Chinese working standards, imports, and traders on African workers and businesses contributed to a first wave of popular anti-Chinese sentiment which African leaders found it hard to ignore. In May 2010 Ghanaian President, John Atta Mills, responded to popular criticism of an influx of Chinese traders into Ghanaian markets by publicly announcing that they would be forcibly expelled from the country if they did not leave of their own accord. Second, Chinese aid and trade was not actually

unconditional. China's previous attempt to establish a major presence in Africa during the late 1960s was motivated by the desire to secure diplomatic recognition as the only legitimate representative of the Chinese people. African votes within the United Nations were crucial to this project, and supported the removal of the rival Republic of China (Taiwan) from its permanent seat on the Security Council in 1971. Loyalty remains a key precondition of Chinese support. When Zambia's controversial opposition leader Michael Sata criticized the Chinese government and pledged that he would recognize Taiwan as an independent county in the run-up to the 2006 general election, the Chinese ambassador threatened that 'We shall have nothing to do with Zambia if Sata wins the elections and goes ahead to recognize Taiwan'. Supporters of Sata's Patriotic Front (PF) later claimed that companies with strong links to the Chinese government had bankrolled the election campaign of the Movement for Multi-Party Democracy (MMD) government in return for a promise that the 'special relationship' between China and Zambia would be maintained. Reports of the death of political conditionality have been exaggerated.

Nonetheless, compared to prominent western donors China sought to shape the policies of African governments on a narrow and relatively peripheral set of issues and was far less willing to be critical of African governments. The absence of democracy back home meant that China has no interest in forcing the pace of political liberalization abroad, and in a number of high-profile cases Chinese engagement empowered reluctant democratizers to withstand pressure for reform. Most famously, the Chinese government continued to work closely with the regime of Omar al-Bashir in Sudan, despite international criticism of human-rights abuses in the Darfur region. In the five years between 2000 and 2005 when condemnation of the 'genocide' committed by the Bashir government was at its peak, trade between the China and Sudan increased from \$890 million to \$3.9 billion. During the same period, attempts to build an international consensus for action against the National Congress Party (NCP) regime within the UN Security Council were undermined by the threat of a Chinese veto. When Bashir was later indicted by the International Criminal Court (ICC) for war crimes and crimes against humanity the Chinese government expressed concern that the arrest of Bashir would have a destabilizing impact and urged the ICC 'not to hear this case for the time being.'

Yet the notion that the rise of China undermined democracy promotion efforts is hard to sustain because it rests on the faulty assumption that the 1990s saw the emergence of an international consensus on the value of democracy promotion that was subsequently undermined by the willingness of China to offer 'unconditional' aid. As we have seen, no such consensus ever emerged. Rather, even in the era of democratic dependency the role of western donors was remarkably inconsistent. For every case where international actors pulled in the same direction to promote genuine

democratization, there was a DRC, Ethiopia, Nigeria, or Uganda where democracy was sacrificed on the altar of security, resources, or pride. China's support for Sudan was no more disastrous to the fate of democracy in that country than French support to the Habyarimana regime in Rwanda, or South African support to the Mugabe regime in South Africa. The international community was already a deeply complex set of rival actors whose contradictory conduct often cancelled out any positive effect on democratic consolidation well *before* the re-emergence of China. The addition of China further complicated this multifaceted set of international dynamics but did not represent a paradigm shift.

China also proved to be more willing to consider human-rights issues than official government rhetoric suggested and continually readjusted its Africa policy in the light of feedback from the international community. Following widespread criticism of its cosy relationship with the NCP and threats by human-rights activists to boycott the 'genocide Olympics', the Chinese government committed itself to playing what it described as a more 'constructive' role in dealing with the Bashir regime. Sudan was subsequently removed from a list of privileged investment destinations for which companies could receive government subsidies. During the same period, the Chinese government also took on a far more prominent role in international efforts to bring peace and stability to a range of African countries, providing over 3,000 peacekeepers for missions in Liberia, the DRC, and Sudan.

China's impact on democracy promotion was also limited by the relatively small number of countries with which the Chinese government developed deep economic relations. In contrast to the comprehensive and pervasive role played by Western donors, China's presence in the period 1990-2010 was decidedly patchy. For all the headlines, economic relations with China only transformed the position of around ten resource rich African states. According to estimates published by the Department for International Development of the United Kingdom, in 2008, China's top five trading partners alone accounted for over 60% of two-way trade with Africa. Between 2006 and 2008 twenty five percent of two-way trade between China and Africa occurred with just one country, Angola. A further 18% was accounted for by South Africa. Beyond a small number of other countries with which China developed particularly strong ties, including Congo Brazaville, Nigeria, and Sudan, the actual impact of Chinese aid and trade was limited. Indeed, while total African exports to China increased by 110% between 2006 and 2008, sixteen countries actually saw their exports decline including Ethiopia, Tanzania, and Uganda. Furthermore, while overall trade between China and Africa did rise dramatically, by 2007 Chinese aid to sub-Saharan Africa was only around half a billion dollars, compared to the \$30 billion provided by members of the OECD. So while there can be no doubt that China emerged as a significant new player on the continent, in the period

1990-2010 it did not represent an alternative to engagement with western donors for the vast majority of African governments.

Nonetheless, the addition of a new international player significantly less committed to democracy promotion did create additional 'wriggle-room' for governments in the small number of countries in which it became heavily engaged. Relations between China and Nigeria initially intensified when the regime of Sani Abacha was forced to search for new foreign partners during the period of international isolation that followed the decision to carry-out the death penalty on Ken Sawa Wiwa and other members of the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) in 1995. China's willingness to engage with Abacha's regime significantly eased the pressure for reform that other international actors had been seeing to build. Similarly, China's provision of a \$2 billion loan to the Angolan government in 2004 significantly reduced the country's reliance on the International Monetary Fund and western donors and emboldened the government to resist western economic and political conditionality. However, even in Angola, Nigeria, and Sudan, it is unclear that significantly more democratic progress would have occurred in the absence of Chinese engagement. Because the countries with which China developed the strongest ties possessed considerable natural resources they were precisely those countries in which resource rents have historically empowered governments to withstand domestic and international pressure for reform (introduction).

FIGURE 2 HERE

Consider Nigeria, which was one of China's top ten trading partners in Africa in 2009, received billions of dollars of investment from the Chinese National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC), and was regularly visited by President Hu Jintao during his trips to the continent. It is thus tempting to see the intensification of ties between Nigeria and China as a major contributory factor to the stalled democratization process following the transition to multipartyism in 1999 (figure two). Yet the impotence of western donors to prevent democratic backsliding was not simply a product of China's willingness to do business with an increasingly corrupt PDP government, but rather reflected the reluctance of America to do anything that might compromise its relationship with a country that by 2007 was providing a third of its oil imports, and which it had come to see as vital to the maintenance of regional stability. As a result, official American action over the deeply flawed elections of 2007 amounted to nothing more than sending a less prestigious delegation to President Yar Adua's swearing-in ceremony. Only a profound misreading of the history of international intervention in Africa would suggest that Angola, Nigeria, and Sudan would have made dramatic progress towards democratic consolidation in the absence of Chinese engagement.