PROMOTING EFFECTIVE DEMOCRATIC REFORM IN SEMI-AUTHORITARIAN STATES AND PSEUDO-DEMOCRACIES [1]

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I. Overview

Democracy promotion is essential for advancing the interests of the United States and the broader international interests of peace, security and development. It is intertwined with promoting human rights, the rule of law and economic prosperity, all of which are necessary parts of realizing human dignity. While democracy promotion is not a panacea, it is an essential element in a mix of foreign policy initiatives – and a critical part of increasingly globalized people to people interactions – that are evermore important in today's international arena.

It is undeniable that most of the geostrategic "hot spots" – including those most likely to erupt into civil or international conflict and those where international terrorists are operating with impunity – are in undemocratic countries. Democracies have the best records in fostering peace across borders, internal stability and economic and social development. They are less likely to suffer widespread civil strife because their political processes provide ways of mitigating conflict. They are less likely to sustain internal terrorist movements because their governance systems provide avenues for the population to pursue change in peaceful ways. They are less likely to harbor international terrorists because open and accountable governance fosters a respect *and demand* for the rule of law.

On the other hand, autocracy, corruption and the lack of accountability exacerbate powerlessness, poverty and intolerance. These conditions breed extremism. Extremists exist in any society, but in order to become a systematic force they must exploit discontent among those who feel powerless or left out of political and economic processes. They use the lack of political inclusiveness, corruption and intolerance to justify the use of violence. Autocrats use the existence of extremist violence to justify their reign and anti-democratic tactics. Thus, a symbiotic relationship exists between corrupt, autocratic regimes and political extremism. Vital elements in breaking this cycle include the promotion of effective political reform, tolerance and development through democratization, respect for the rule of law, human rights and human dignity.

Promoting effective democratic reform in highly authoritarian states, where genuine democratic processes are blocked but where some political space exists, is therefore essential because "it is the right thing to do" and because *realpolitik* – which embraces the tough work necessary to advance strategic interests – demands it. Even undemocratic governments that have joined the call to fight international terrorism cannot be exempt from efforts to promote

democratic reform within their borders. In the medium and longer term, neither they nor the international community can afford the consequences of corrupt, autocratic rule.

II. Promoting Effective Democratic Reform Requires Tailored Approaches

NDI has worked in countries that are marked by consistent, though at times difficult, democratic progress. Most of NDI's work, however, has been – and continues to be – in countries where democratic progress is problematic at best. *The Institute's experience through all of its work demonstrates that there is no archetype or model for democracy promotion.* Rather, to be effective in promoting democratic reform, activities must be tailored to address country-specific challenges, including national history and culture, ethnic composition, experience in managing political and other conflict, the presence and popular appeal of extremist groups, levels of economic development, political traditions, relative strengths and weaknesses of the political opposition, civil society organizations and those in power, as well as other factors.

For example, a series of activities over a period of years in a country like Serbia cannot be mechanically applied in countries such as Zimbabwe or Belarus, nor can expectations for short-term results in the latter countries be matched to the relatively brief period surrounding dramatic changes in the former. There is no magic bullet to use against autocracy in any country let alone one that can be re-used in numerous countries. There are, however, universal principles behind democracy promotion, as well as practices, that can be applied in any country as component parts of democratization strategy.

Experience also demonstrates that there is no simple checklist to follow in defining the nature of a "semi-authoritarian" regime.[2] It could be argued that most of the countries where NDI works are "semi" authoritarian, in varying degrees. Each presents a blend of elements of autocracy, clientalism, pluralism within limits and some formalities of democracy. Analysis therefore must examine a number of factors and consider how conditions interact at various times within the same country to identify important opportunities for promoting democratic reform. A rigid analysis that places a country at a fixed point on a semi-authoritarian "spectrum" can lead to missing critical opportunities.

For example, an absolute monarchy may decide to open political space in important respects; a military regime may announce its intention to implement a transition to civilian government; an autocrat may allow room for the democratic opposition in an attempt to win

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[2] There are numerous ways to discuss terms such as "semi-authoritarian states" and "pseudo-democracies." For the purposes of this discussion paper "semi-authoritarian states" refers generally to those states where authoritarianism is a determining factor in the political dynamic but where there is limited space for political activities that are independent from and even in opposition to the regime. Often such states are characterized also by corruption and clientalist, patronage systems. In this paper "pseudo-democracies" refers to countries where authoritarianism is less pronounced, where formal elements of liberal democracy exist (such as diverse political parties, a parliament with some ability to question government, a degree of press freedom and some level of civil society activity) and where there is even some alternation of governance – but where corruption, clientalism and other factors negate the democratic substance of politics.

concessions from the international community. These developments can provide opportunities for democratic reformers to gain critical skills and experience, perhaps setting the stage for major reforms or "breakthroughs," even where those in power may not have genuine intentions.

Experience further demonstrates that there is rarely a clear-cut event – a democratic breakthrough – from which flows a dramatic and positive sequence of political developments. Even a change in the nature of a regime from a military dictatorship or a one-party state or a rogue authoritarian ruler to a civilian, multi-party system by no means guarantees the development of a genuinely democratic political process. Rather, experience shows that preexisting political elites may manipulate so-called post-breakthrough conditions to consolidate autocratic rule.   At the same time, incremental reforms can accumulate, leading to changes in the quality of political processes without one specific breakthrough event. Realistic, modest expectations therefore must be set for the short-run to avoid disappointment and demoralization among reformers, as well as "fatigue" among members of the international community.

Experience also makes clear that various political and governance processes cannot be artificially separated from one another. While a specific reform, or a specific violation of rights, may be critical to the overall process at a particular moment, the interrelationships of politics, governance, economic development and security mean that progress or regression in democratic development must be considered in the aggregate and over time. Effective democratic reform cannot be accomplished overnight or by a piecemeal approach.

Tailoring approaches to country-specific conditions also requires flexibility in deciding when and what type of activities to emphasize. There is no such thing as a set "sequencing" of developments nor is there a set timeframe upon which reforms must be pursued. For example, when the military regime in Nigeria announced in 1998 that it intended to conduct a transition to civilian rule, it was appropriate to call on the military to "front-end load" reforms so that Nigerians and the international community could judge the sincerity of the regime and develop corresponding confidence in its pronouncements.   The military had a great deal of resources at its disposal, and the country benefited from relatively sophisticated civilian political and civil societies.

In a country where financial resources are scarce and political organization is very weak, a more protracted negotiation process to establish the rules of the game through mutual buy-in (or consensus building) may be needed. That sometimes can offer advantages, such as reducing the potential for conflict and providing an opportunity for political tendencies to strengthen their organization and explore alliances that provide alternatives to the inheritors of the old regime. Even the timing of essential processes like elections should be subject to country-specific considerations. Just as elections must be part of a broader effort to build sustainable peace in conflict-prone societies, elections in semi-authoritarian states and pseudo-democracies must be placed in a broader context of seeking political reform and genuine democratization.

III. Key Factors for Meaningful Reform Can Be Identified

Analyzing the factors that may increase the possibilities for genuine democratic progress is not a science, but a number of factors can be identified that increase or retard the potential for political reform. The combination of numerous factors is important in examining the conditions

at particular moments in semi-authoritarian regimes and pseudo-democracies, bearing in mind that conditions change. Among such factors are the following:

- 1) the relative organizational strength of the political opposition;
- 2) the relative degree of unity among the political opposition in seeking common goals;
- 3) the relative strength of civil society organizations, including civic groups, trade unions, business organizations, religious groups and others;
- 4) the relative degree of unity of civil society organizations in seeking common goals;
- 5) the degree of cooperation between the political opposition and civil society organizations;
- 6) the degree of popular mobilization by political and civil societies;
- 7) the relative openness of the news media and the relative degree of pluralism and accurate reporting presented by the media and actually received by the public;
- 8) the degree of political space allowed by the regime for opposition activity, including the access allowed for interaction with foreign organizations;
- 9) the relative levels of expectations among the population for change and/or dissatisfaction with present conditions;
- 10) the relative strength and unity of the incumbent regime; and
- 11) the relative degree of interest and the degree of unity among various segments of the international community (i.e., the possibilities for concerted international pressure).

This is not an exhaustive or exclusive list nor is there a formula by which the likelihood for meaningful reforms or breakthroughs can be predicted. It is nonetheless possible to state the almost obvious, with the caveat that even then outcomes are not always predictable. For example, where the regime is strong and unified, political space is very limited (including no or very restricted access to outside assistance), the political opposition is weak and disunified, there are low levels of popular mobilization and little international interest, meaningful democratic reform is unlikely – unless the regime is enlightened. This description, minus enlightenment, could apply to The Gambia or Togo. It could also apply to Kyrgyzstan or Kazakhstan. However, with minor changes, it could also have applied to Morocco not long ago, although significant, positive developments now seem to be taking place in that country.

The analog to the description, of course, would be a country where the opposition develops organizational strength and unifies, civil society organizations strengthen and cooperate with the opposition, popular mobilization increases significantly, fissures in the regime weaken it, and the international community applies concerted pressure. This could describe developments in Serbia over time; however, such factors did not develop sufficiently in a short period to produce major changes in Belarus (although ground was gained by the opposition in Belarus, which merits continued support with realistic expectations). Other national factors must be considered like the history of resistance or protest movements in a country, which may help to explain differences in the pace or nature of developments in trying to expand political space or change the quality of the regime in places such as Serbia and Belarus or differences surrounding developments last year in Zimbabwe, Madagascar and Zambia.

Caveats aside, however, analysis of country conditions in autocratic regimes and pseudo-democracies can point to the types of program activities that are likely to more effectively promote democratic reform over time.

IV. Certain Approaches and Tools Are Needed to Promote Effective Democratic Reform

In countries that are highly authoritarian – but where there is some space for conducting political activities that are independent from and even in opposition to the regime – democratic reform should help to break the virtual monopoly on power and help to develop viable alternative power centers. Democratic reform efforts should also seek to develop viable alternative power centers in countries where formal elements of a liberal democratic system are in place, including some alternation of parties in power, but where corruption, clientelism and other factors negate the democratic substance of politics.

Building alternative centers of power through reform efforts can eventually off-set the power concentrated in the regime. The process of developing such alternative centers must seek to mobilize popular participation, which helps to create hope and the public confidence in reformers needed to establish a democratic mandate. In highly authoritarian countries that allow limited political space, experience demonstrates that working with state institutions (such as ministries) is unlikely to produce any significant democratic reforms. While it is useful to reach out to reformers that can be identified within the executive branch in such countries, efforts should be concentrated on working with non-state institutions, such as parliaments, political parties, civil society organizations and the media. Working with reformers in parliament, and working with parties and civil society organizations on approaching parliaments as part of reform advocacy can achieve developments that demonstrate to the population that reform is possible.

A number of approaches and tools are needed to effectively promote democratic developments in semi-authoritarian states and pseudo-democracies. Experience confirms that the approaches used must be multifaceted because no one tool fits all settings, and more than one is always needed. The tools and approaches are also important in other types of countries but take on a particular importance when tailoring programs in these difficult settings. In countries where avenues for reform are highly constricted, it is all the more important to develop broad support for reform. Government-backed violations of civil and political rights are not uncommon in such settings, and shortcuts to changing the regime, without building a democratic mandate, may be tempting – particularly where elements of the military could offer quick fixes. In the cases of Cote d'Ivoire and Pakistan, many democrats initially welcomed the military only to discover that the new regime was not committed to a democratic transition. This illustrates the danger of attempting to short-cut building broad support – for democracy, after all, is about the *means* by which political *ends* are pursued.

Building Responsive Political Parties Is Critical. An indispensable element for promoting effective democratic development over the medium and long term in semi-authoritarian states and pseudo-democracies is the creation of strong, inclusive, accountable, internally democratic, trustworthy and effective political parties. A tall order in any country, but the adjectives depict the alternative to autocratic, corrupt and ineffective – though strong and somewhat inclusive – political organizations that hold power in such countries.

Responsive political parties are not perfect, but they are the keystones of democratic societies. They aggregate and represent social interests, providing a structure for political participation. They provide an institutional framework for popular mobilization that seeks to gain public office and govern, based on a platform that addresses issues in accordance with the interests they represent. Political parties translate their positions on issues into public policy alternatives in the legislative arena, thus clarifying public debate. If parties are successful in garnering sufficient support for their policy initiatives, they set the basis for government action.

In semi-authoritarian states where there is a significant threat to stability from extremist groups, autocrats attempt to pose as the only alternative to extremists gaining control, while extremists attempt to pose as the only alternative to autocracy and corruption. Both attempt to limit possibilities for reform by squeezing political moderates. This is particularly true in states with politicalized, extremist Islamic movements. Supporting moderates through efforts to build responsive political parties, including assisting the development of national and transnational alliances of Muslim democrats and democratic Islamists, and alliances that also include secular, ethnic and women's political constituencies, is critical in such settings. Development of strong, "liberal" political parties that address development of civic culture and basic services to grassroots populations can present effective institutional alternatives to those who use mosques, schools, newspapers and social service delivery groups to show that their vision of religious states is the solution.

Building strong, responsive political parties in semi-authoritarian states and pseudo-democracies in many instances is the hardest thing to do among democracy promotion activities. These regimes understand that such parties could eventually pose a threat to the status quo. They therefore orchestrate the instruments within their control to bar such party development. Inhospitable political environments at times combine with extremely weak and fractured democratic opposition elements to make large-scale political party development activities infeasible. Nonetheless, while working with other democratic reform sectors, opportunities should be identified to work with party activists inside and outside the country on party strengthening, which can help establish a basis for more robust future programs.

Many factors must be addressed in assisting the development of responsive political parties. Organizational development at the headquarters level down to the grass roots is central. Matters like message development, targeting, recruiting and developing new leadership, must be combined with skills building in areas such as:

- strategic planning within and beyond electoral cycles;
- bringing women, youth and other underrepresented sectors into parties and their leadership;
- negotiation with those holding governmental power and others;
- alliance building with other political tendencies;
- linkages with civil society groups organizations (including civic groups, trade unions, business associations, think tanks and other sectors);
- development and use of public opinion data from surveys, focus groups and key-person interviews inside and outside the party, including techniques for identifying differences in discussing issues based on gender, ethnic and age groups and other differences;

- analysis of legal frameworks in order to more effectively advance a reform agenda in areas like the rules for electoral competition, parliamentary activities, poverty reduction, economic policy, public integrity/anti-corruption and other matters;
  - public policy research and analysis; and
  - internal educational campaigns linked with feedback mechanisms.

Work with parties must also address a range of actions outside the electoral arena, including identifying key constitutional and legal reforms that help break power monopolies and demonstrate an ability to create change. Assistance should also address techniques for building reform campaigns (including extra-parliamentary efforts such as petition drives for referenda or local government action), organizing local forums (such as "town meetings" and "house meetings"), organizing mass assemblies (such as concerts to support a reform issue and political rallies). These activities can be linked with actions by civil society organizations in umbrella reform efforts. The way political parties and civil society organizations interacted to gain legal and constitutional reforms in the lead up to Kenya's 1997 elections, the campaign around the 1999 constitutional referendum in Zimbabwe, and even the petition drive to force a referendum in Cuba provide examples.

Parties also should be encouraged to look to elements of the international community for support beyond embassies and foreign governments, such as the political internationals (Christian Democrat International, Liberal International, Socialist International and International Democrat Union), inter-governmental organizations (UN, OAS, OSCE, EU, SADC and others that have bodies capable of lending support for reform efforts), and the international human rights mechanisms (complaint procedures of the UN Human Rights Committee, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and European Commission of Human Rights). While these sources may provide only modest support, if parties set appropriate expectations and seek to take advantage of their assistance in targeted ways, they can be valuable to reform efforts.

Promoting Inter-Party Dialogue Can Set the Stage for Reform. One of the most important elements for achieving democratic progress is developing unity among reform elements. Programs that promote inter-party dialogue can foster unity through building relationships and providing opportunities for identifying common interests. That can set the stage for more effective reform advocacy in semi-authoritarian states and pseudo-democracies. Inter-party dialogue activities also contribute to conflict management, which may be another critical objective in a significant number of states.

Inter-party dialogue can focus on relatively narrow issues that do not necessarily tout a larger reform agenda. The dialogue can also be structured as multi-event exercises focused on larger issues, such as constitutional reform, economic reform or reform of electoral frameworks – that is, negotiations over the "rules of the game." Dialogue mechanisms can be ad hoc and informal, or they can take various types of more formal structures, such as inter-party liaison committees. The March 2002 extra-parliamentary dialogue that reached an agreement on the local government and local election law in Georgia and election law reform roundtables held in numerous countries are examples of useful ad hoc efforts.

Dialogue and relationship-building experiences also can be based on study missions that take multi-party delegations out of the country to explore how certain issues or processes are addressed elsewhere. If these modest activities are part of a series and longer term plan, they can

be building blocks in a process that identifies common interests. Reform elements within ruling parties in semi-authoritarian states and pseudo-democracies can be included in inter-party dialogue. This technique has proved useful in places as diverse as Haiti, pre-1994 South Africa, Bangladesh and Morocco.

While there are a significant number of ways to structure inter-party dialogue activities, they cannot take place in a vacuum. Selection of formats, sponsors, degree of formality, issues to address, degree of publicity to attach, which parties should participate and from what level of seniority participants will be drawn – all require pre-existing relationships and consultations. Just as important, inter-party dialogue activities should relate to assistance in party strengthening. Skills building in strategic planning helps individual parties see how to identify the most advantageous issues, formats and levels of engagement for inter-party dialogue. Skills development in negotiation and alliance building, communications and bringing forward new leadership are also important in approaching dialogue activities. Inter-party dialogue activities also must be considered in the context of building linkages and alliances with civil society organizations.

Civil Society Organizations Must Build Capacities for Impartial Watchdog and Advocacy Efforts but Must also Partner with Political Parties on Issues of Common Interest. Civil society organizations are vital to promoting democratic development in any country and all the more so in semi-authoritarian states and pseudo-democracies. Building impartial (nonpartisan) civil society watchdog and advocacy efforts in such countries is essential for promoting democratic reform. This is particularly true in the electoral arena, where the population does not trust government or the political parties to conduct a clean electoral process or produce a report of electoral results that accurately reflects the political will of the people exercised at the ballot box.

The tremendous efforts of scores of domestic nonpartisan election monitoring groups and coalitions in countries around the globe have mobilized hundreds, thousands and tens of thousands of citizens, particularly youth and women, to participate in electoral processes and hold governments and political contestants accountable to the law and the public trust. Work with such efforts must take a longer term perspective and help them to apply skills learned and networks developed to issues beyond the election cycle. This is being done in many countries from Bangladesh to Morocco, Malawi to Ukraine, and Serbia to Peru. However, the tendency to fund assistance to such groups for election activity and not to carry the activity forward at appropriate post-election levels hinders the potential to push forward reform efforts.

The development of a zone of activity that is impartial concerning electoral processes is important for encouraging citizens to see that civic action in the broader public interest is possible and that governments can be held accountable. It also is important for encouraging those seeking political power to participate in elections and to accept the results of genuine elections. The actions of nonpartisan election monitoring efforts, including conducting electoral "quick counts" or "parallel vote tabulations" are not just anti-fraud measures but also help to mitigate the potential for violent post-election conflict.

Many other civil society organizations, along with election monitoring groups and coalitions, have mobilized citizen participation in governmental processes through watchdog, advocacy and civic education activities. They, like political parties, act as leadership training

grounds and vehicles to mobilize citizen action to engage in the political process as an alternative to avenues offered by extremist groups.

The efforts of civil society organizations must overcome a sometimes popular view that engaging in politics or working directly with political parties would destroy their organizations' independence or undermine their effectiveness. This view subverts the nature of representative politics and undermines civil society efforts to promote democratization. While civil society organizations should preserve their independence from parties and from government, it is necessary for them – in their variety of forms – to partner with political parties on appropriate issues of common interest. Such partnering can take place in differing ways, including the following.

- Civil society organizations can play critical roles in building movements for constitutional and political reform. Political parties can participate in such movements. The interaction between civil society and political parties can foster extra-parliamentary actions and legislative initiatives to bring about constitutional and political reform. *[E.g., in 1997 Kenyan civil society organizations, including civic, human rights, labor and religious sectors, launched the National Convention Executive Committee; eventually opposition political parties joined the effort; this spawned the Inter-Parties Parliamentary Group; dialogue within the IPPG reached an agreement that led to enactment of legal and constitutional reforms.]*

- Civil society organizations can develop a reform agenda, based in some cases around a single issue (such as: electoral reform; public integrity/anti-corruption programs; economic policy; judicial reform; or pension, health and environmental issues) or on a multiple-issue agenda. Through interactions with political parties, they can identify parties that may support or even adopt public policy initiatives to advance a common interest. They can encourage parties to initiate and support legislative action and/or join in common efforts to improve or change actions by the executive branch to advance their interests and concerns. *[E.g., in 1999, CeSID, a Serbian civic group, drafted an alternative election law; through interaction with democratic opposition political parties, the CeSID draft became the basis for the democratic electoral reform agenda and the post-Milosevic law.]*

- Civil society organizations that have a specific issue focus can interview political parties and candidates, through questionnaires and in-person interviews, to determine whether they support public policies and government action consistent with the respective organization's views. They can keep "score cards" on party, legislative and/executive branch officials to determine if actions are taken to advance the issues, and can inform the public accordingly. *[E.g., in 1998, Slovak labor unions rated each political party on their labor agenda and handed out post cards to voters to help build support for reform.]*

It is important that these efforts be creative and aimed at identifying and pursuing common interests. At the same time, civil society organizations should not merge with or become subordinated to parties, nor should parties (or government) be encouraged to form surrogate civil society organizations that falsely project independence or nonpartisanship. While in highly authoritarian states and pseudo-democracies civil society organizations typically meet

government-sponsored resistance to reform activities, and their accurate, critical descriptions of the conditions may make them appear to merge with the political opposition, it is all the more important for civil society groups to maintain their spheres of independent action.

Defining the Democratic Reform Agenda and Alliance Building Require Opinion Research, Analysis Skills and Communications. Promoting effective democratic reform requires knowledge of what the population believes is needed to improve conditions and what it thinks about and expects from those seeking reform. Helping political parties and civil society organizations develop skills in public opinion research and analysis is therefore an essential element for reform promotion.

Polling has proven particularly important to informing reformers about popular priorities for developing an agenda. Focus groups have proven effective in identifying how population segments actually speak about the issues, including the differing ways women and men and differing ethnic, age or other groups may address their concerns about the same issue. This knowledge is central to determining how to craft specific messages and how to take more effective initiatives to mobilize the participation of women, youth, ethnic groups and others.

Other public opinion research techniques, such as key-person interviews, can be combined with polling and focus groups to determine how the population and opinion leaders perceive political parties and their leaders (as well as civil society organizations), to determine what might be needed to demonstrate the development of effective alternative power centers and a democratic alternative to the status quo. Such techniques have been incorporated into NDI's Latin America Political Leadership Program and were conducted as part of assistance to party development in Pakistan.

Communicating messages about the issues, reform agenda and successes in alliance building are also important to building effective democratic reform efforts. This not only requires skills building in message development and communications strategy; assistance programs focused on the news media are critical. Of course, where there is little media freedom, where journalists and publishers face concerted government pressure – and where they may even face great personal risks for activities unfavorable to those in power or who benefit from corruption – defense of independent journalists must be a priority.

Working with those in the media who seek to conduct themselves in accordance with recognized professional responsibilities merits a high priority as well. Mass media are the key to the population receiving information upon which to make political choices, and even a small opening in this area can send an important signal that meaningful change is possible. At times these programs are possible even in very restricted political circumstances, as illustrated by the journalists' forums by *El-Youm* (The Day) newspaper in Algeria and the Institute's work with journalists in Azerbaijan in 1995-97.

"Getting out of the Capital" and Reaching the Grassroots Are Essential to Democratic Reform. Effective democratic reform in semi-authoritarian states and pseudo democracies requires reaching beyond political elites. It is essential to work with political leaders, and it is necessary to concentrate on building reform movements that create democratic political reform at the top. However, assistance should help democratic leaders to grasp the importance of establishing a popular basis for reform by building broad citizen support; this

requires direct contact with citizens around the country. While it may be possible to advocate successfully for certain reforms by using traditional channels of communicating among the members of the political class – and while this may be tactically advantageous for achieving certain reforms – it is necessary to develop broader efforts to challenge the way regimes operate.

Many, if not most, highly authoritarian and corrupt regimes employ forms of clientalism that include patronage networks to reinforce those in power, while blocking an inclusive political process. Promoting democratic reform in such settings requires that political parties and civil society organizations employ tactics that involve, or at least touch, large numbers of people to demonstrate that there is an alternative form of politics.

While it is not always possible to mobilize nationwide campaigns, due to lack of resources or organizational strength or due to threats against personal security, a range of tactics should be employed to reach beyond the traditional political society. These tactics can include petition campaigns, civic education activities, organized discussions and other activities around the country. For example, in 1994 Romania's Pro-Democracy Association conducted "Voter Month" activities around the country to address means of mobilizing actions beyond elections to gain local reforms; PDA also conducted a petition campaign, gaining over 100,000 signatures in support of a referendum initiative. In 2000, efforts of civic groups in Kazakhstan contributed to withdrawal of a local government law by collecting over 100,000 signatures, plus a letter writing and call-in campaign, petitioning parliament.

V. Elections Present Key Opportunities for Advancing Reform

Elections are essential to establishing democratic governance, sustainable peace within countries and development. They must be approached in the broad political context of each country and in light of economic, social and cultural conditions. Experience clearly shows that it is a mistake to treat elections as a magic cure for violent conflict or anti-democratic traditions – or as a substitute for sustained efforts to achieve political and economic reform. Experience demonstrates just as clearly that failure to recognize the critical importance of elections and to address the opportunities presented by them reinforces corrupt, ineffective and autocratic regimes and increases the potential for conflict.

Semi-authoritarian states and pseudo-democracies allow elections to take place, though under conditions that negate their democratic nature. The electoral cycle nonetheless allows political parties and civil society organizations to act in a broader sphere and usually allows international organizations, such as NDI, IRI and IFES, to assist in electoral activities. Elections also concentrate the attention of the population on issues of governance and create an opportunity for the mobilization of broad popular participation. These factors can accelerate democratic change and/or expose regimes that resist it – which can be an important part of working to change the nature of a regime.[3]

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[3] Heightened political competition also can increase the potential for violence, particularly in societies emerging from civil strife and war, where mechanisms for conflict management are nascent. In those circumstances, election-related programming must be part of a broad and concerted effort to construct sustainable peace – recognizing that achieving genuine, democratic elections is vital to sustaining peace and establishing stable governance.

Corruption of the electoral process usually is concentrated in pre-election and post-election periods. The 1998 elections in Cambodia provide a striking example where pre- and post-election abuses negated the positive aspects of election day. Countries where violence and intimidation are important factors (e.g., Cambodia, Zimbabwe and Bangladesh), and countries where vote-buying and other forms of corruption play significant roles (e.g., Armenia, Kenya, Peru and Thailand) highlight the importance of addressing pre- and post-election developments. The 2001 elections in Belarus, the 2000 elections in Peru, as well as elections in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Serbia and Zimbabwe also illustrate this problem – although each demonstrate that fraud in voting and vote tabulating processes remains a significant factor in corrupt, semi-authoritarian regimes.

As noted above, activities of civil society organizations in nonpartisan election monitoring, which mobilize thousands of citizens in governmental accountability activity, is important where the population has little trust in the government or the political process. Appropriate alliances between civil society organizations and political parties for electoral reform also are important. Such alliances can be particularly significant in seeking reforms in the legal frameworks for elections, including for accreditation of nonpartisan election monitoring and leveling the playing field for political competition, an example of which is noted below concerning Peru.

Emphasis is also needed to help parties to better participate in the adoption of the rules for electoral competition, as well as to help parties build capacities to document electoral abuses and pursue remedies through complaint mechanisms and in the court of public opinion, including the use of pollwatchers on election day. The assistance should demonstrate how such activities integrate with campaigning, get out the vote (GOTV) efforts and consolidating into party structures volunteers, party activists and potential party leaders who emerge through these activities.

Experience has demonstrated that a linchpin in whether or not electoral processes maximize the potential for democratic progress or expose the corrupt nature of the political process in a country is whether there is impartial and effective electoral administration. This problem is tied directly to the nature of the political process. Where selection methods for electoral authorities allow for broad participation of political parties from the opposition, members of electoral bodies tend to benefit from confidence of the political contestants and the citizenry. The possibilities for developing appropriate selection criteria and an appropriately inclusive selection process can be enhanced by inter-party dialogue and inclusion of civil society input. The resolution of this issue can be an important indicator of how the election administration will ultimately perform and therefore deserves international attention and assistance.

VI. Corruption, Clientalism and Patronage Regimes Must Be Addressed

Corruption, both political and economic, presents one of the gravest threats to democratic and economic development, as well as to political stability. Highly authoritarian regimes and

governments that created façades of liberal democracy, while excluding genuine political participation through clientalist patronage systems, are usually poisoned by the effects of corruption. Such countries are often havens for drug trafficking, other forms of organized crime and for terrorist groups that feed off the discontent of the population. To be effective, democratic reform must address corruption in any country and particularly in such states. The failure to address corruption reinforces impunity of the perpetrators and hastens the potential for unrest led by extremists.

Semi-authoritarian states and pseudo-democracies often create corrupt political dynamics whereby those in power provide economic rewards (such as money and government contracts), resources (such as public sector jobs, social welfare services, permits and concessions), political status (such as appointed positions and a limited number of seats in parliament, including parliamentary immunity) in exchange for political acquiescence. Such buy-offs, which can effect political parties, parliaments, local governments and civil society organizations alike, are often discussed concerning countries in the Middle East, North Africa, the Caucuses and Central Asia but are not restricted to any particular geographic region.

Anti-corruption reform therefore cuts across assistance to political parties, parliaments, civil society organizations and efforts to strengthen the rule of law. In each area, however, the crux of effective reform is to muster the political will necessary to confront corrupt, autocratic systems. Technical fixes will fail to deliver meaningful reform unless they are part of a broader political process. Through various programs in this area, experience demonstrates that obstacles to reform implementation must be examined along with adoption of reforms that meet national conditions. In addition, experience confirms that reform measures require activities to promote popular understanding and support.

Anti-corruption programs also are best seen in a broad context of addressing appropriate roles for money in politics and promotion of public integrity of democratic institutions and processes. Political party activities, for example in NDI's recent program in Asia on "Political Party Strategies to Combat Corruption," in the Latin America Political Leadership Program and the 1998 program that led to the establishment of the Consultative Conference of Political Parties in Southern Africa (CCPA), all confirmed the need to address topics such as: candidate and party leadership selection; ethical standards, evaluation and discipline for accountability of party officials and candidates; financial management and fundraising, including transparency and compliance with applicable disclosure requirements; building a legislative anti-corruption/public integrity reform agenda; how to partner with civic organizations that focus on related issues; and creating regional networks so that parties can learn from each other's best practices.

In the legislative arena, the issues addressed in programs in countries such as Nepal, Morocco, Turkey and Georgia, have focused on ethical governance of parliamentarians through issues including member disclosure of personal and financial information, averting conflicts of interest, mechanisms of addressing alleged cases of member corruption, how legislative committees can effectively monitor budgeting and expenditures of the executive and translation of party initiatives in the anti-corruption area into legislation and laws, how to provide for public input and use the capacities of civic organizations that focus on this area, as well as how to empower justice agencies and the judiciary to impartially enforce the law. The Morocco program, for example, helped parliament to incorporate citizen input through offering workshops

to allow discussion of anti-corruption issues by a wide audience and formed a Moroccan Ethics Resource Team, a group of outside experts to provide advice on a range of issues.

In the civil society area, assistance has focused on building public pressure to generate the political will to implement reforms that challenge corrupt political systems. These activities address ways to gain access to government held information (such as through advocacy for freedom of information acts and similar laws), assistance in how to use such access and to educate citizens about their right to information, how to approach political parties in efforts to build alliances for obtaining reform in the areas of anti-corruption, public integrity and money in politics, how to petition legislators for information and to advocate for reform measures (such as establishment of ombudsman offices, citizen complaint bureaus, auditors-general, special prosecution units and anti-corruption courts), as well as how to monitor and report about corrupt practices.

The richest example of NDI programming in this area is Thailand, where the Institute is working with the People's Network for Elections in Thailand (PNET) and the Union for Civil Liberties (UCL) to conduct anti-corruption activities in several provinces, based on customized programs to combat political patronage and money in politics. The activities include educational programs on community radio and using music, drama, public forums, workshops and candidate debates, and, where it is safe to do so, monitoring candidates for corrupt practices. Prior to these programs, through election monitoring activities and the Campaign for Popular Democracy, which comprised six university organizations and over 100 civic groups that conducted public education concerning the 1997 constitution, assistance addressed using the new Freedom of Information Act and how to monitor corrupt activities.

Many of the public integrity and anti-corruption activities take on a particular character in the electoral area. Improper financing of election campaigns, vote-buying, misuse of government resources for electoral advantage and other forms of election rigging have been the focus of anti-fraud activities of domestic nonpartisan election monitoring efforts around the globe. The focus on preventing, deterring and exposing electoral fraud has been a training ground for citizen watchdog efforts in broader areas, including anti-corruption efforts in places like Thailand, Mexico, Kenya and Nicaragua. Electoral experience also has demonstrated to a broad range of political parties the wisdom of building reform coalitions with other parties and alliances with civil society organizations for reform in areas of common interests. Advocacy for such reforms has helped to build pressure for democratic change in semi-authoritarian states and pseudo-democracies.

VII. Action by the International Community Can Help Catalyze Democratic Reform in Semi-Authoritarian States and Pseudo-Democracies

Pronouncements and Actions Taken by the International Community Can Encourage or Frustrate Democratic Reform. Clear and consistent support from the international community for democracy and human rights encourages democratic reformers to pursue their goals and serves notice on governments that anti-democratic actions are not acceptable.

For example, forceful calls by the United States and the OAS for rectification of electoral fraud in the Dominican Republic in 1994 encouraged efforts that led to amending the constitution, which set an extraordinary presidential election that halved Joaquin Balaguer's term, among other reforms. Splits in positions in the international community, however, thus far have allowed Robert Mugabe to reap the benefits of rigging this year's presidential election. In the 2000 election process that was ultimately stolen by Alberto Fujimori in Peru, the press releases by the State Department, White House and congressional resolutions that backed findings of the joint NDI/Carter Center monitors, the OAS election mission and domestic observers helped Peruvian democrats to extract incremental reforms in the pre-election period, and pressures after the elections, including actions by the OAS, helped set the stage for the post-Fujimori return to democratic processes.

Clear Incentives and Disincentives from the International Community Contribute to Achieving Democratic Reform. Incentives are necessary for semi-authoritarian states and pseudo-democracies to accept democratic reform. *The most important incentive is to promote understanding among such governments that their own medium and longer term self-interests in stability and progress are best achieved through developing genuine pluralism and a democratic political process.* Bilateral rewards, such as debt reduction and development assistance, and multilateral incentives, such as the World Bank poverty reduction programs, should be linked to democratic reform, because the hindrances to economic reform are often based on blockages in the political process – and, as described above, other critical interests like the global battle against terrorism are linked to developing inclusive political and economic systems.

National histories and traditions will lead to differing approaches to these tasks. The political will of national leaders in these countries, however, must be mustered to meet the desire of their populations to embrace democracy over autocracy and corruption. Material incentives through bilateral and multilateral assistance should be provided to reward those governments that both cooperate with strategic campaigns, like those against terrorism and drug trafficking, and adopt an active approach to developing democratic governance and promoting human rights. Such rewards can help reinforce political will but are not a substitute for it.

NDI does not take positions on financial assistance to specific governments, but it is clear that there are benefits to using rewards for democratic progress. A corollary to this would be negative incentives in the form of refusing or curtailing assistance to those governments that have a negative track record in promoting democracy and human rights.

International Democracy Networks, Intergovernmental Organizations and International Nongovernmental Organizations Can Be Important in Promoting Democratic Reform. Newly developing efforts like the Community of Democracies, World Movement for Democracy, initiated by the National Endowment for Democracy, and the World Forum on Democracy, initiated by Freedom House, are potentially important tools in promoting democratic reform in semi-authoritarian states and pseudo-democracies.

All governments seek to develop international ties to confirm themselves as legitimate international actors. Invitations to join networks such as the Community of Democracies (as full participants or "observers," as well as the potential of exclusion from such networks), should be tied to meeting democratic benchmarks that help catalyze the reform process. NDI's experience in organizing the Emerging Democracies Forum, held in Yemen in 1999, and the Institute's

present initiatives with democratic former heads of African states and with Muslim heads of state, reinforce the importance of international networks in democracy promotion. Activities of the World Movement for Democracy and the World Forum on Democracy allow nongovernmental democratic reformers to exchange experiences across borders and regions, which can bolster domestic reform processes.

Linkages between democratic activists in one country and their counterparts in other countries establish solidarity that can shatter a sense of isolation and allow the sharing of knowledge and skills. Promoting transnational linkages and alliances of democratic reformers regionally and globally, including both Muslim democrats and democratic Islamists, should be an important part of promoting democratic reform.

Intergovernmental organizations, both global and regional, also can play important roles in promoting reform in semi-authoritarian states and pseudo-democracies. Efforts of the Office for Democratic Initiatives of the OSCE, the Unit for the Promotion of Democracy of the OAS, and the SADC Parliamentary Forum, as well as the UN's Electoral Assistance Division and UNDP have all made important contributions to supporting democratic reform in semi-authoritarian states and pseudo-democracies. These and other intergovernmental organizations work directly with government offices in many cases, setting out benchmarks for governmental action. They also collaborate with international nongovernmental organizations like NDI, IRI, IFES and others and on occasion give support directly to domestic reformers, particularly to NGOs. Regional efforts of international nongovernmental organizations, such as NDI, have also assisted democratic reformers inside semi-authoritarian states and pseudo-democracies.

VIII. Conclusion

The emergence of a substantial and systematic threat from international terrorists has changed the mix of strategic considerations for building and maintaining international peace and stability. This threat and the conditions in which it breeds make democracy promotion all the more important to safeguarding international interests. Nongovernmental organizations like NDI, IRI, IFES, and agencies of the United States government that have supported our activities around the world, should not shy away from promoting democratic reform – particularly in semi-authoritarian states and pseudo-democracies, including those that are frontline states in the war against terrorism.

It is true that no country and no people are suited to dictatorship, autocracy or rampant corruption. It is also true that the international community cannot afford the alternative to building democratic states, which provide constructive avenues for change, encourage tolerance and deliver inclusive politics and economic development. The costs of supporting efforts to promote democracy, human rights and the rule of law are far less in human and financial terms than allowing a cycle to develop of constantly suppressing terrorism's regeneration.

Democracy promotion is not only the right thing to do; it is the smart thing to do. Moreover, it is a necessary thing to do and is one of the principal challenges at the opening of 21st Century.