



Project Report
Assessing Democracy Assistance

Assessing Democracy Assistance:

Georgia¹

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This report is FRIDE's contribution to a project entitled 'Assessing Democracy Assistance' that is being carried out by the World Movement for Democracy. The project aims to gather views on how democracy support can be improved and its impact enhanced. Other case studies and a synthesis report can be found at www.fride.org.

If Georgia's democratic development were to fail during the next ten to fifteen years, it would prove a severe blow to the concept of democracy promotion. Seldom have so much effort and funding from the international community been directed to democracy promotion in a country that is open to democratic change but which lacks a clear EU membership perspective.

The November 2003 Rose Revolution that brought Mikheil Saakashvili to power changed the country substantially. Western attention and aid increased significantly and the new government pushed through a series of radical reforms, for instance in fighting corruption. Although foreign leaders, especially US President Bush, praised Georgia's progress towards a liberal democracy, little has actually been achieved since the departure of Shevardnadze. Freedom House's 2003 score for Georgia's democratic credentials was 4.83; six years later, the 2009 rating was even slightly lower at 4.93. This leaves Georgia in the transitional governments/hybrid regimes category with Bosnia and Herzegovina and Ukraine.²

The August 2008 Russia–Georgia war over South Ossetia and Russia's recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia as independent states has complicated Georgia's transition to democracy. Not only have the possibilities of these regions' reintegration into Georgia or a mutually acceptable settlement become more distant, so too have membership

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²Freedom House, Nations in Transit 2009, <http://www.freedomhouse.org/uploads/nit/2009/Tables-WEB.pdf> (accessed 12 May 2010).

of NATO and the European Union (EU). Due to the tense situation in Tbilisi the year after the war, the Georgian government has focused on security, stability and state-building; placing only minimal emphasis on democratic reform. Meanwhile international donors became more hesitant in their support to Georgia's government and its president, who initiated hostilities after provocation by Russia.

Mass protests before the war in summer and autumn 2007 and after it in spring 2009 not only revealed serious criticism of the current leadership, but also the weakness of the opposition, which was unable to offer an alternative and merely demanded Saakashvili's resignation. By the end of 2009, Georgia seemed to have entered more tranquil waters, with a certain level of stability achieved and Saakashvili firmly in power. The government can therefore no longer use a state of crisis as an excuse for not driving forward the implementation of democratic reforms.

This paper assesses democracy promotion in Georgia; its recent past and probable future. The emphasis lies on donor policies, and on recipient implementation through civil society organisations and government agencies. In the latter case the main focus is on support to Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), think tanks and other civil society actors. The Abkhazia and South Ossetia regions, over which Tbilisi has no control and in which 'democracy promoters' have limited access, are excluded from this assessment.

The amount of funds and number of actors involved in democracy promotion in Georgia has been overwhelming during the past 5 years. This paper shows that the complexity of democracy promotion in Georgia has led to weak coordination and cooperation among donors. Second, donors have the tendency to change priorities quickly, led by shortcomings identified by the media and democracy and human rights watchdogs. This has resulted in them 'running from fire to fire', sometimes overlapping but always lacking a long-term strategy. Third, the main donors have been hesitant to use the substantial leverage they have in making sure the Georgian government fulfils its democratic reform promises. Now that the street protests have largely ended and the immediate threat of war with Russia has declined, donors have the opportunity to push Georgia to more in-depth reform. Finally, the paper shows that it is difficult to prioritise areas of democratic reform in Georgia as need is high in all areas, and the possibilities to be active through support are not restricted. If priorities do have to be set however, attention to political party and free media development should rank high; not by just investing more but through a coordinated approach.

Democracy promotion actors

In the run-up to the Rose Revolution in November 2003 international democracy donors gave substantial support to Georgian civil society organisations, in particular NGOs with an anti-government stance. Many of President Saakashvili's cabinet ministers and members of parliament were part of that civil society. After the revolution when a new group of young leaders took power, donors switched their democracy funding from civil society to the government, leaving NGOs that had lost their leaders weakened. One civil society representative claims that some donors demanded that NGOs adapt their projects directly to involve the new government in ongoing work.

The switch from support of civil society to government support was stressed by one donor, who in 2006 opened a democracy-related fund for civil society organisations. In the first call for proposals 400 NGOs sent in a proposal because other sources of funding had mostly dried up. Donors' confidence in the Saakashvili government was translated through initiatives such as a UNDP Governance Reform Programme, which consisted of a Salary Supplement Fund (SSF) that helped to pay the salaries of the President, Ministers and Judges, with a view to creating greater transparency and countering corruption. Among the donors were the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) and the Open Society Institute (OSI). The programme was stopped in 2005, mainly due to criticism from Russia, which argued that the West had forced a revolution in Georgia and had the new leaders on their payroll. The second part of the programme – the Capacity Building Fund (CBF) – in which government agencies hand in proposals for project funding, is less controversial and still runs on an annual EUR 1 million budget, including Swedish and Irish funding.

Over the last two years donors have been redirecting attention to civil society. Donor confidence in the Georgian government's good intentions has been weakened by the 2007 street protests, which were violently broken up by the police, and more specifically by the August 2008 war with Russia. Still, the Georgian government is regarded as a trusted partner, as shown in Brussels in October 2008 when the international community pledged USD 4.55 billion to Georgia, which will largely be used for assistance to Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), social projects, investments and rebuilding infrastructure. One commentator argued that the war has almost been a blessing in disguise. The donor conference took place at the time when the worldwide financial and economic crisis was taking hold. Georgia has employed the funds that have been transferred so far in an intelligent way, using them to curtail the worst effects of the crisis by rescuing the banking system and the Lari currency from spiralling down in value.

Table 1: Funds pledged during the October 2008 Brussels Donor Conference (top 13)

Donor	Pledged in million USD	Donor	Pledged in million USD
United States	1.000	Japan	200
EBRD	927	Sweden (SIDA)	53
EU Commission	637	Germany (GTZ)	44
World Bank	530	Norway	40
IFC	350	Ukraine	24
EIB	329	Switzerland	19
ADB	300	Total	4.453

Source: Transparency of International Aid. Reports and Press-releases of TI Georgia (23 October 2009)
http://www.transparency.ge/files/50600_538_946178_transparency_eng.pdf

Transparency International Georgia in coalition with seven Georgian NGOs and institutions³ has set out to monitor the way donors have earmarked the substantial funds (about 1000 US dollars per Georgian) and their use by the government. This enormous amount is provided on top of existing financial commitments and only a small amount will be reserved for democracy related projects.

The United States is the largest donor to Georgia, has contributed the largest proportion of the pledged USD 4.55 billion and is also the largest donor to democracy promotion. The October donor pledge is largely not democracy promotion orientated. Still, USD 48.6 million of the 1 billion pledged would be reserved for democracy projects.⁴ It is noteworthy that one quarter of the USD 1 billion will be granted to Georgia in the form of direct budget support – a mechanism seldom used by the US – though it is unclear whether this support is also meant to build stronger democratic institutions. Another expert stated that the US is currently reviewing democracy assistance programmes, planning to step up cooperation with and funding for civil society and developing new ways to help build an independent, professional free media in Georgia.

Although it might be too early to assess US policy under the Obama administration, it seems that Georgia is ranked lower on the foreign policy priority list than was the case under the Bush government. There are several indications of this, including US efforts to build a new relationship with Russia, Washington's silence over future NATO membership for Georgia and the fact that Obama and Saakashvili have not met yet, although the latter has tried to arrange meetings. Nonetheless, USD 1 billion shows a clear commitment to the country's economic and democratic development. This became clearer through the words of Vice President Biden who visited Tbilisi this summer:

Your Rose Revolution will only be complete when government is transparent, accountable, and fully participatory; when issues are debated inside this chamber, not only out on the streets; when you fully address key constitutional issues regarding the balance of power between the parliament and the executive branch, and levelling your electoral playing field; when the media is totally independent and professional, providing people the information to make informed decisions, and to hold their government accountable for the decisions it makes; when the

³ Transparency International Georgia, The Open Society Georgia Foundation (OSGF), the Eurasian Partnership Foundation (EPF), the Georgian Young Lawyers Organisation (GYLA), Civitas Georgia, The Economic Policy Research Centre and Green Alternative.

⁴ 'Clinton: Georgia Remains High Priority', Civil Georgia (Tbilisi 25 February 2010), <http://www.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=22021>

courts are free from outside influence and the rule of law is firmly established, and when the transfer of power occurs through peaceful, constitutional, and democratic processes, not on the street.⁵

Most US democracy assistance is channelled through USAID although a host of other US agencies are also active in Georgia; the Department of Justice has several projects focused on rule of law, while the US Military runs Security Sector Reform (SSR) programmes that incorporate some democracy aspects for instance in fine-tuning civil-military relations in the Ministry of Defence. The USAID Democracy and Governance programme has four portfolios. The first is civil society including media development. Projects focusing on the media stopped in 2005, but now plans have been developed for a renewed effort. Second, political processes including political party development (run by the International Republican Institute) and a parliamentary reform programme. The overall aim is to strengthen communication between government and the public. Third, good governance with a focus on local issues. Most of the local governance work was supposed to end in September 2008 but the programme was extended to help local governments deal with IDPs after the war. The final portfolio is rule of law with a focus on the courts: transparency, independence of judges, case management, and public perceptions on rulings. The Ministry of Justice has its own programme that focuses on different aspects such as the relation between police and the judiciary. USAID support is delivered through different mechanisms, principally grants (support to existing projects and institutions), more detailed corporate agreements, and small funds for interesting proposals that are brought to the USAID's attention.

Two institutions are of particular importance in relation to US democracy promotion efforts in Georgia; the National Democratic Institute (NDI) – which has a focus on parliament – and the International Republican Institute (IRI) – which targets on political party development. Both also work on other democracy-related work and are largely funded by USAID, regardless of the parties' political strength at home. Another substantial donor to IRI and NDI work is the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), which to a more modest extent also funds a host of NGO projects in Georgia.⁶ NDI's work in Georgia began in 1994 but in-depth work with parliament started in 2004. Three years ago, NDI facilitated the establishment of a public liaison office in parliament. IRI has conducted regular polling on a variety of issues since early 2003. These polls were also used in training and meetings with members of many political parties. Both organisations plan to focus their work increasingly in Georgia's regions, further extending seminars, training and advice beyond Tbilisi.

Whereas US interest in Georgia seems to have declined from unconditional support to practical assistance, the EU's interest and activities have grown. The EU reacted quickly during the Georgia–Russia war in brokering a ceasefire and agreement. It also deployed a European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) mission (EUMM) to Georgia that monitors the August agreement. EUMM is not allowed into Abkhazia and South Ossetia, which declared their independence and now have substantial Russian troops within their borders. Meanwhile the Georgian government has been moving slowly from prioritising quick NATO accession to long-term EU integration. The EU's new Eastern Partnership (EaP) that applies to Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Moldova, Ukraine and Georgia is a welcome engagement, which in Tbilisi's view will hopefully be translated into a membership perspective at some point. The EaP touches on a broad range of topics; from border security to investment, and from visa facilitation to cooperation on climate and environmental issues. It is up to each participating state to decide how active they will be in making use of this offer of cooperation and EU engagement. Two aspects are of particular interest to this study. Under the Eastern Partnership, a Civil Society Forum has been established to offer NGOs from these countries better access to EU officials but also closer liaison with European civil society organisations. Second, one of the four main policy platforms focuses on democracy, good governance and stability. The EU has earmarked EUR 350 million additional funding for the Eastern Partnership over the period 2010–2013 and will also allocate EUR 250 million of the European Neighbourhood Policy Instrument (ENPI) to the EaP. Essentially, the EaP aims to both strengthen the political commitment to the already existing European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), and to offer an additional financial and assistance stimulation package on top of ENPI.

In terms of activity, scope and funding, the Commission is after the US the second largest actor in assistance to Georgia, including democracy promotion. Nonetheless, Commission officials were disappointed that the EU member states were unwilling to contribute USD 363 million on top of the Commission's USD 637

⁵ Speech by Vice President Biden to the Georgian Parliament (23 July 2009), accessed at <http://georgia.usembassy.gov/transcripts/speech-by-the-vice-president-biden-to-georgian-parliament-july-23-2009.html>

⁶ In 2008 NED supported IRI with a grant of USD 400,000 and NDI with two grants of 273,856 and 83,098. See <http://www.ned.org/where-we-work/eurasia/georgia>

million to add up to the USD 1 billion pledged by Washington during the October Brussels donor conference (see table one). EU assistance instruments and mechanisms are diverse and complex. In the case of democracy promotion, there are four interlinked ways in which the Commission supports democratic reform in Georgia. The first method is the ENPI, which from 2007–2010 allocated EUR 31.5 million to the top priority, ‘Democratic Development, Rule of Law and Governance’ (26 per cent of total ENPI funds).⁷ This amount excludes additional funds pledged during the Brussels Donor Conference, some of which might find their way to democracy-related projects. These bilaterally agreed funds are used mainly for direct sectoral budget support for the Georgian government and on twinning projects. The second way is the worldwide Non-State Actors and Local Authorities Programme, which provides substantial funds through co-financing of civil society and local government projects in Georgia. Third, the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) focuses specifically on supporting civil society’s work on democracy and human rights projects. The fourth mechanism is the Governance Facility, which awards ENP countries that perform particularly well in reform of governance structures with a substantial additional grant. Public information on this new EU incentive is scarce; to the knowledge of interviewees it has not yet been provided to Georgia.

Among the EU member states Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden and the United Kingdom are the most active in support of democracy projects. The German development agency GTZ has been a substantial contributor; two of the four priority areas are ‘municipal development and democracy’ and the ‘legal and juridical system’. But Germany is also involved in democracy promotion through four Stiftungen representing the countries’ main political parties: the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS) with a focus on political party development, media freedom and international/security dialogue; the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) which, among other issues, takes a particular interest in working with NGOs and labour unions; the Heinrich Böll Stiftung, which focuses on civil society development and organising debates on democracy and security related issues; and the Friedrich Naumann Stiftung, which works on capacity building for political parties, economic freedom and European integration. The projects of all four often have a regional emphasis, bringing Armenians, Azerbaijanis and Georgians together.

Georgia is a key country for Swedish development aid, while Armenia and Azerbaijan were recently dropped from the ‘support list’. After environment and trade, democracy and human rights is the third priority, supported through several large projects in which SIDA provides some budget support to Georgia, funding for the Eurasian Partnership Foundation (EPF) and project support to UNDP and the think tank GFSIS. The Netherlands works through its MATRA programme, which incorporates many democracy-related projects funded either through small grants to Georgian NGOs or larger grants to European (often Dutch) organisations in cooperation with Georgian civil society organisations. Each year around two larger MATRA projects (with a budget of EUR 500,000 and lasting 2–3 years) are initiated in Georgia, while several smaller grants amounting to around EUR 160,000 are distributed to Georgian and Armenian civil society. The UK Department for International Development (DFID) largely left Georgia in 2008 but still supports a parliamentary training programme and funds work there by Transparency International. Through the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) funds, the local embassy supports several democracy-related projects with a security underpinning, arguing that increased democratic practice will help build stability and security. Finally, the Czech Republic and Poland regularly support several NGOs and projects in Georgia.

Numerous international organisations are also active in democracy promotion. Of these, the OSCE had the most substantial programmes in its human dimension portfolio but was forced to leave Georgia in 2009 following disagreement within the organisation about the status of Abkhazia and South Ossetia that became apparent when Russia insisted on opening separate missions in both regions. UNDP took over several of its tasks as well as many local OSCE staff. Under the scope of the democratic governance programme UNDP works on a range of capacity-building projects such as public sector reform, parliamentary development, assistance to the Supreme Court and decentralisation. The Council of Europe (CoE) office focuses on constitutional and electoral reform, political party ‘guidance’, rule of law, criminal justice and media minority issues (religion, ethnicity etc). It mostly provides advice and is not engaged as a donor to civil society or government. The CoE is, however, involved in several larger democracy-related projects with Danish or Dutch funding and cooperation. Finally the CoE reporting is important for the Georgian government since EU funding for projects often depends on it. NATO plays only a limited role in democracy promotion, mostly

⁷ European Neighbourhood Partnership Instrument, Georgia, National Indicative Programme (2007–2010), http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/pdf/country/enpi_csp_nip_georgia_en.pdf

through political dialogue and monitoring of democratic values in relation to the Annual Action Plan that should eventually lead to membership. Some programmes under the Partnership for Peace (PfP) header support research and debating initiatives.

There are also two influential foundations that are both democracy providers (grant-makers) as well as implementing organisations. The Open Society Georgia Foundation (OSGF) and the Eurasian Partnership Foundation (EPF) play an active role in democracy promotion programming in Georgia not only through funding and projects, but also because they are instrumental in the coordination of support and linking civil society organisations to donors and sometimes to government agencies. The OSGF has three major programmes: human rights and good governance, media independence and civil society. The EPF touches on a broader range of topics: from citizen participation to European integration and from supporting research to cross-border cooperation in the Caucasus.

This overview has only listed the actors who most substantially support Georgian democracy. The list is by no means exhaustive. Countries like Switzerland – a large donor to Georgia which focuses less on governance and democracy – or Japan play a role, as do several international non-governmental organisations such as International Alert, Freedom House and Transparency International. In most such cases, it is difficult to assess how much each donor spends annually on democracy-related support.

Georgian views

Assisting transitional societies to become fully-fledged democracies is a complicated business which needs fine-tuning and a certain level of agreement and common purpose from the actors involved; donors, state institutions and civil society. Essentially assistance is necessary on all fronts since neglect of one area is likely to affect other areas of support; governance, local governance (including decentralisation), the judiciary, the legislature, election procedures, political parties, media and civil society. In Georgia substantial support has been forthcoming to all these sectors over the past few years, but in an unbalanced way with donors emphasising different areas and state institutions showing different levels of willingness to proceed with reform.

In the field of governance donors have mostly been engaged on a national level through long-term programmes and monitoring reform. The focus on training has not been great because the new governing elites are young and many have been educated in Europe or the US. In the eyes of local commentators, countervailing institutions still remain weak. When Saakashvili came to power the Constitution was immediately amended in early 2004; an event that was quietly accepted by Brussels and Washington, although it was contested by Georgian civil society. Presidential powers increased at the cost of legislative and judicial powers. One feature of this is the President's power to dissolve Parliament and to appoint cabinet ministers without Parliamentary approval, excluding that of the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister needs to be approved by Parliament, but if Parliament does not grant approval the President can dissolve Parliament. The emphasis of the post-revolution government was clearly on state building (while fighting corruption and pursuing economic development) rather than on creating a system of checks and balances including transparent and accountable government. Attempts to amend the constitution in order to rebalance the powers have so far failed despite promises by the President. In June 2009 the President established a commission to draft a new Constitution; the commission incorporates government and opposition politicians, legal experts and civil society representatives. In spring 2010 the commission plans to present three drafts (a Presidential system, a Parliamentary system and a mixed version). Meanwhile most opposition parties have boycotted the commission and have established their own group that plans to propose a draft in early 2010. The drafting process is supported by several donors including USAID (which gives logistical support), the Venice Commission of the CoE, the Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy, and through GTZ, which tries to bring members of both commissions together while the international community closely monitors the process.

During the past year, local governance has attracted increased attention from the donor community due to

the need for local communities to handle the influx of IDPs from South Ossetia following the war. Not only are large donors increasingly supporting programmes of decentralisation, but civil society organisations also tend to go out into Georgia's regions and work with municipalities. Whereas several NGO representatives assess cooperation with local officials as positive and welcome increased funding possibilities, they are often negative concerning the political will of the government in Tbilisi to hand over authority and responsibility. One development heralded by donors and civil society alike is the direct election of mayors; for the upcoming municipal elections the people of Tbilisi will be able directly to vote for a mayor. Plans to introduce this scheme in four other major cities did not make the cut. Next to the EU – through its Non State Actors and Local Authorities in Development programme – and the US, smaller donors have stepped up activity in local democratic governance; for instance, the Czech Republic and Poland have for the past few years been funding a Georgian NGO called Civitas that specifically works on regional education and training projects, and community based work including building networks of local authorities.

The Judiciary and Parliament are two sectors of democracy promotion that have been overwhelmed by projects over the past few years. Almost all donors have been working on rule of law programmes with mixed results. Civil society representatives often view courts as being too close to executive power. From drafting a new Constitution to property law reform and from criminal justice to minority rights, juridical reform lacks coordination. One donor complained that it is impossible for judges to find timeslots for twinning projects with European or US colleagues or other training initiatives due to the amount of projects underway. This also applies to the Parliament, which is overwhelmed with training initiatives touching on both the main tasks of the parliament; lawmaking and holding the government to account. Several European and American institutions and NGOs work with Georgian counterparts on parliamentary programmes as well as directly with parliamentary commissions; most programmes have decided to continue while the bulk of opposition parties chose not to be represented in parliament.

Support to electoral reform is generally assessed as positive. This is not so much an area of donor support but of monitoring – through the OSCE/ODIHR or the CoE for instance – and pressure for reform by Europe and the US and especially the Georgian opposition. Whereas elections are overall assessed positively by ODIHR reports they claim that there is room for improvement. Recent reform that resulted from criticism and opposition pressure on the government translated into lowering the threshold for parliamentary representation from 7 to 5 per cent and increasing the number of opposition representatives on the electoral commission. Meanwhile an Interparty Group was formed in February 2009 to draft a new Election Code. Whereas only limited attention and funds have been dedicated to electoral reform, the opposite is true for political party development. While the main governing party, the United National Movement (UNM), has been prospering from international support through training and advice, opposition parties have been unable to put this outside assistance to good use. In part 6 of this paper, specific attention is devoted to this crucial part of democracy assistance that has largely failed so far, taking into account the absence of a conducive political landscape and the weakness of party structures and ideologies.

Independent media development is another area that will be discussed more in-depth in part 6 since it is of particular concern to many donors that have decided to devote special attention to this field through new programming. The main concerns stem from the government's 'indirect' control of most TV channels, unclear property rights and the poor quality of reporting. The government's grip on electronic media has worried democracy donors as well as human rights groups. The latter claim that the three main TV stations are owned or directed by those close or in government; this only leaves two small stations left that only can be received in Tbilisi.

As mentioned earlier civil society development is on the international donors' agendas again after an absence during the years immediately after the Rose Revolution. Civil society organisations (at least NGOs) can be roughly divided into three groups. The first is non-political and service providing: examples of these are Civitas and to a lesser extent Green Alternative, which works on environmental issues but does sometimes take a critical stand on political issues. Then there are the think tanks and NGOs that are close to government circles such as the Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies (GFSIS), the Caucasus Institute for Peace Democracy and Development (CIPDD), or the Liberty Institute. The third group consists of NGOs that

take a more critical stance. One of the most influential and active NGOs in this sense is the Georgian Young Lawyers Association (GYLA), which is critical but cannot be directly associated with opposition forces. More outspoken is the Human Rights Centre that closely scrutinises the Georgian government's human rights credentials. All these organisations harbour different views on donor assistance in the field of democracy and set different priorities when asked what donors should focus on.

Next to media and political party development, several aspects of democracy promotion are listed as positive and worthy of targeted support. One example is the office of the Ombudsman, which only receives a small amount of outside funding but is performing well. Another is the Ministry of Finance, which is understaffed and ill-equipped to coordinate and account for the large amounts of donor funding but is working hard to be more effective and efficient according to many interviewees.

Concerning civil society itself, support to labour unions is sometimes cited. While these have barely been able to move away from Soviet structures and traditions, some positive developments are noticeable through the support of USAID and Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, for instance regarding the teachers' union. Civil society is still in need of further attention at grassroots level, however. Beyond the NGOs, grassroots civil society remains weak since labour unions and the Church are often not regarded as part of it, while the Western concept of civil society is based on these institutions.⁸ One central civil society organisation, the Church, is unlikely to receive foreign support yet plays a key role. Trust in the Church increased after the 2008 war and both the government and opposition are vying for its support. The conservative Church essentially seems to support the government, but sees it as too pro-Western. The Church disapproved of the war and believes relations with Russia should be improved.

Civil society organisations in Georgia believe the government has been spoiled by the EU and US in terms of political support and funding, while several of them are struggling to obtain grants for projects. Civil society actors in general argue that receiving EU funding is complicated, and that reporting obligations are bureaucratic and overly precise. Often it takes a year before funding is granted, during which time the project idea may have become obsolete or overtaken by events. On a positive note NGOs and think tanks are happy to work through EU funding, mainly EIDHR and the Non-State Actors/Local Authorities in Development mechanisms, since the EU does not interfere in implementation and trusts grantees on their work once support is awarded. In the case of USAID funding the opposite is true. Obtaining funds and reporting duties are manageable in comparison with the Commission, but the US does tend to keep a close eye on the actual implementation through mid-term requests for changes in projects and making sure projects follow US funding interests. Small civil society organisations certainly prefer to work through EU member state Embassy grants (notably the Czech Republic, Netherlands, Poland, Sweden and the UK) that have easily accessible, clear-cut programmes.

Overall the Georgian government and civil society are well off as regards international donors for democracy promotion, and they know this. In the view of many stakeholders the challenge for both donors and grantees is to achieve greater depth by undertaking longer-term projects that work on very specific aspects of democratic governance. Complaints of donor work that only scratches the surface, a too great influx of external expensive advisors and habits of standard support to the 'usual suspects' in the NGO community are rife. Clearly the challenge is to deepen the approach, avoiding overlap and building coordination mechanisms.

Threats to democracy aid

Georgia was meant to be the success story of American democracy support during the Bush administration. Now the results of democracy support are questioned. Saakashvili's credentials have been called into question while security concerns overshadowed attention to reform. Nonetheless, Georgia remains an excellent opportunity for democracy support. First, there are no alternative models to democratisation (a Russian inspired model of 'sovereign democracy' is rejected and Islamisation does not figure as a possibility); second, the population fully supports democratic change and close relations with Europe and the US; third, the government might have lost some of its reform activism but can still be trusted overall to move towards

⁸ Khutsishvili, George, 'Georgia's Degenerative Transition' in Richard Youngs and Michael Emerson (eds.), *Democracy's Plight in the European Neighbourhood. Struggling Transitions and Proliferating Dynasties* (Brussels: Centre for European Policy Studies, 2009), p. 71.

deeper democratisation; fourth, economic development was impressive before the worldwide economic crisis and Georgia, although affected, is currently able to resist the worst effects of the downturn; and fifth, the country has no substantial oil or gas reserves which would allow it to turn into a classic rentier state.⁹ The Georgian leadership will have to convince supporters that its enthusiasm for democracy has not declined since the Rose Revolution nor been weakened by war. After the August 2008 war Saakashvili committed to democracy in his speech to the UN Assembly. He declared that he would make Georgian democracy more robust:

First, we will strengthen the checks and balances of our democratic institutions, including granting greater independence to Parliament and to the judiciary; second, we will provide additional resources and protections to foster greater political pluralism, including by increasing funding for opposition parties and ensuring they have greater access to the airwaves; third, we will strengthen the rule of law by enhancing due process, trials by jury, and lifetime judicial appointments and; fourth, we will expand and deepen protections of private property.¹⁰

This pledge is important since although Georgia might be fertile soil for democracy; threats to its success do exist. One commentator argued that the most severe hurdles and risks to Georgian democratic development are the donor community having 'spoiled' Saakashvili's government too much following the revolution; the threat posed by Russia; and the lack of a democratic history, resulting in a political culture that is not based on institutions. The strong political and financial support to Georgia's democratic development after the Rose Revolution has backfired to some extent since it has not been backed up by clear benchmarks for reform or by devoting sufficient attention to the security aspects of tensions growing in 2007 and 2008 leading up to the war over South Ossetia. Taking financial support for granted to a certain extent, the Georgian government has regressed in areas that were expected to pose few problems. Currently there is a concern among donors regarding human rights violations in Georgia. The most commonly cited problems that EU embassies and the US worry about and increasingly monitor are violence against opposition members, the relative lack of accountability of the Ministry of Interior and the failure to meet basic standards in prisons. Pressure is at times used against those who do not fully conform to the view that Russia is the common enemy and that South Ossetians have betrayed Georgia. A campaign set up in 2007 by the Human Rights Centre under the name 'Sorry', aiming to create dialogue between Georgians and the Abkhaz people, was almost impossible to implement. The government accused the latter of being traitors and members of staff were harassed.

The August 2008 war has had an impact on democracy promotion in Georgia in several ways, the most obvious being the blockade installed by Russia against international institutions' activity in Abkhazia and South Ossetia; officially still part of Georgia though recognised as independent by Russia (and Nicaragua and Venezuela). Besides this the war has affected the government, civil society and donors alike. Although it claims otherwise, the government put democratic reform on hold due to security concerns and only picked up where it left off after opposition protests in the streets of Tbilisi and mild criticism from the international community. While a good level of stability has been achieved a year after the war and six months after the most severe street protest, government officials and NGO representatives close to the government talk about security rather than democracy. Georgian policy-making has become more restricted to the President and a small group of trustees – the Ministry of the Interior plays a key-role – turning most ministries into silent implementers. The view is that Russia will not rest until Saakashvili leaves office, and the threat of renewed hostilities is very much alive. The argument goes that Russia has not only stripped Georgia of two territories but will want to keep Georgia weak and block development where possible, especially in the sphere of governance. Civil society organisations have meanwhile somewhat moved away from democracy-related work and either shifted to security topics or to humanitarian aid. The latter direction explains the need indicated by NGOs and donors alike to work increasingly in Georgia's regions, including with IDPs.

Related to the war and important to democratisation is Security Sector Reform (SSR), especially given that a war was fought and NATO membership is no longer on the horizon. In 2007 the Georgian defence budget reached its peak, accounting for 30 per cent of the state budget; an absurdly high percentage for any country. While NATO was closely monitoring progress for integration through the National Action Plan with Georgia and the EU and US were fully aware of this enormous budget, a substantial part of which was used

⁹ Some of these arguments can also be found in Lincoln A. Mitchell, 'Democracy in Georgia Since the Rose Revolution', *Orbis* 50/4 (2006), p. 671.

¹⁰ Speech by President of Georgia, Mikheil Saakashvili, 63rd Session of the UN General Assembly, 23 September 2008, accessed at <http://www.president.gov.ge/?l=E&m=0&sm=3&st=20&id=2746>

for buying and updating weapon systems instead of investing in human capital, barely any eyebrows were raised regarding this allocation that took funds away from other sectors of society and might have contributed to increase tensions with Russia over Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Material investments were lost in the war; 30 per cent of equipment was destroyed, the two biggest military bases of Gori and Senaki were devastated and not much is left of Georgia's navy and air force.¹¹

Substantial military assistance and funding has been forthcoming through the US for years while NATO has monitored Georgia's progress both on defence reform as well as on democratic and economic credentials. It will be crucial for Georgia to rebuild its armed forces in an affordable way so that they do not absorb a third of the state budget. They must be appropriate for their purpose (meaning small contributions to international peace missions); and acceptable to the population but also to neighbours. For this to be achieved, an increased effort on issues such as parliamentary oversight of defence policy and spending and civil-military relations through discussion, training and twinning will also be necessary, and preferably through a concerted approach of EU member states and the US. A smaller, accountable and effective military might also help avoid mutinies like that which took place in May 2009 when two brigade commanders allegedly planned to move forces to Tbilisi to oust the government; it is unclear if Russians were involved.

After spoiling the Georgian government with much assistance and little pressure, and the impact of the war, a third risk to democracy promotion is the absence of strong institutions and possible alternatives to Saakashvili. Although Russian president Medvedev regarded Saakashvili a 'political corpse' after the failed campaign to regain control of South Ossetia, the Georgian president has managed to stay in power – despite street protests by the main opposition parties demanding him to step down and the EU-initiated Tagliavini report arguing that Saakashvili had started large-scale hostilities (although provoked by the Russians). Saakashvili will remain in power until at least the next presidential elections, scheduled for 2013. By then he will have served his maximum two terms. No serious contenders have risen to the occasion until now, with the possible exception of Irakli Alasania who heads the new Our Georgia – Free Democrats Party and will run for mayor of Tbilisi, and Giorgi Targamadze, who leads one of the few parties still in Parliament, the Christian Democratic Party. Democracy assistance should concentrate on building stronger institutions in Georgia to withstand any turmoil in 2013 or before. A concerted strategy is needed for parliamentary support, strengthening (the non-power) ministries such as Finance, and institutions like the Ombudsman and the Central Auditing Authority. Only a strategy that is supported by a host of donors that includes the EU and US and focuses on key governance and institutional issues will help guarantee the stability achieved one year after the war. Short term reactions through quick programming to shortcomings – media reform and currently human rights – will help little in the long-term. For this to work, donor coordination and pressure on the main recipient of funds – the government – is required.

Conditionality, engagement and coordination

After the Rose Revolution support to Georgia's government was almost unconditional, especially through US funding, which was even more substantial than in comparison with the EU than it is today. When President Bush visited Tbilisi in May 2005 he called Georgia a 'beacon of democracy'. This made it hard for local civil society groups to be critical of government policy.¹² As one commentator argues, the pre-Revolution government was more open to cooperation than the current one. Whereas the Shevardnadze government listened and made promises but delivered nothing, the Saakashvili government is not interested in civil society's views, although it is more likely to follow up when promises are made. US conditionality is not direct through the use of immediate benchmarks, but more political in nature owing to the substantial leverage Washington has on Tbilisi. In January 2009, the two countries signed a Charter on Strategic Partnership and a Commission was formed in June to hold regular discussions on security, economic relations, people-to-people exchanges and democracy.¹³ This forum is ideal for the US to take up concerns with the Georgian government; concerns that are based on the US's own reporting – the Freedom and Democracy Reports – but also based on international watchdogs such as ODIHR's election monitoring, Freedom House's national status of democracy assessments, Transparency International's corruption index and Human Rights Watch's reviews. Public criticism of Georgia's reform track-record has been rare. It is through bilateral meetings

¹¹ Pierre Razoux, 'What future for Georgia?', NATO Defense College Research Paper 47, June 2009, p. 2.

¹² Marina Muskhelishvili and Gia Jorjoliani, 'Georgia's ongoing struggle for a better future continued: democracy promotion through civil society development', *Democratization*, 16/4 (2009), p. 684.

¹³ Philip H. Gordon, 'Georgia: One year After the August War', Testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Subcommittee on Europe, Washington DC, 4 August 2009.

that criticism is expressed and monitoring results are discussed, not least because the US is engaged in substantial budget support, a funding practice not often used by USAID.

Most donors seem to agree that the time has come for the Saakashvili government to deliver on reform. Now that the brief war of 2008 is no longer an immediate threat to stability, the government has no excuse not to proceed with reforms such as creating a second public TV channel; opening up the National Security Council to opposition members; drafting a new Constitution and undertaking electoral reform – all promises made by Saakashvili and thus necessary for both Georgians and donors to monitor progress and implementation.

Through the Commission, the EU takes a slightly more critical view of reform than the US. Its criticism is mainly made through the annual progress report within the ENP framework. The 2008 report takes into account that Georgia underwent a turbulent year while making some progress on the democratisation and good governance front, primarily in strengthening rule of law and fighting corruption. There is a more negative reading of media freedom and pluralism. The EU also notes that civil service reform has stalled and that government funding to the Ombudsman office is insufficient, most likely due to a tense relationship between the government and the Ombudsman, resulting from the latter's criticism of the government.¹⁴ The EU reacted to Saakashvili's September 2008 announcement at the UN of a new wave of democratic reform by providing a package of political conditionality linked to the EU post-conflict assistance. The EU has become a more robust player in Georgia as a result of the EU Monitoring Mission, increased levels of assistance and the new Eastern Partnership. The latter in particular gives the EU substantial leverage in the absence of a clear membership perspective for Georgia.

The EU and US's leverage in pushing Georgia to further reform does not lie so much in the number of assistance programmes or the amounts involved; it is the political support rendered to the Georgian government that is key here. Negative publicity abroad is likely to have an impact on Saakashvili's position in internal affairs. A fine balancing act by the international community is essential to deliver support while making sure the promises of renewed democratic reform are kept.

Due to the extent of democracy assistance and the number of donors involved, coordination has proven difficult. The overlap of efforts stands in contrast to the enormous challenges in assisting Georgia to become a fully-fledged democracy. Essentially donor coordination proceeds in three ways. First, donors need to have their own affairs in order. For instance, USAID holds a meeting once every three months with recipient organisations to keep track of their support and discuss priorities (this excludes funding through other US agencies). Meanwhile, after initial doubts the EU Commission Delegation is now planning to coordinate civil society support with member states. The German institutes (GTZ, KfW (German Development Bank), the four Stiftungen, the Goethe Institute and the German Embassy) meet on a monthly basis; to exchange information on each other's activities – although not to coordinate actual projects.

The second method of coordination consists of high-level meetings between ambassadors of donor countries and local directors of international organisations such as UNDP and the Council of Europe. It is unclear whether these monthly meetings aim at coordination or information exchange. They are said not to focus on direct coordination of projects but rather on broader assistance priorities, while the ambassadors often take the opportunity to receive a briefing on a specific topic; recently the Chairman of the Constitutional Reform Committee did so as well as the Ombudsman. It is unlikely that clear decisions are taken since ambassadors and organisation directors act as links between their peers at home and the project managers on the ground. Nonetheless these meetings do have merit as they can be used to streamline larger programmes, such as recent plans by several donors including the EU Commission and USAID to increase support to independent media.

The third coordination mechanism is based on a sector approach and is more ad hoc. On most democracy-related issues, a recipient or grant-making organisation has taken the initiative to organise regular coordination meetings. Transparency International is for instance leading a group of seven institutes that monitor the allocation of funds pledged at the October Brussels donor conference; the Eurasian Partnership Foundation coordinates a group of organisations working on European integration; and the Open Society

¹⁴ Implementation of the European Neighbourhood Policy in 2008. Progress Report Georgia (Brussels 23 April 2009). Accessed at http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/pdf/progress2009/sec09_513_en.pdf

Georgia Foundation organised a few broader civil society coordination meetings that were well received. Still, not all democracy-related issues are well-coordinated. On the issue of electoral code reform, there is less coordination because fewer local organisations are involved and the main projects are run by external actors themselves such as UNDP, CoE, USAID and NDI. The latter hosts a working group (at the request of the Speaker of Parliament), which includes the parties both in and outside of Parliament.

Both donors and civil society organisations argue that the Georgian government should take on more responsibility in coordination of funds and projects. So far the government has shown little inclination to take on this task, especially in the field of democracy and governance projects. Donors complain that there is no clear call from the government for specific projects or funding with the exception of direct and sectoral budget support. If requests are made, different donors are sometimes asked for the same assistance, unbeknown to them.

Successful coordination of democracy assistance to Georgia is difficult due to the scope and size of initiatives and funding. Support to civil society should be more carefully orchestrated by the EU and US. If the Commission Delegation and US Embassy would lead in such an effort, smaller but still substantial donors such as UNDP might follow suit. Coordination of democracy and good governance assistance – including the efforts made in the rule of law area – that goes directly to the government in the form of budget support, twinning and bilateral projects should preferably be coordinated by the Georgian government, possibly through the Finance Ministry and based on a broadly agreed roadmap.

Priority sectors: media and political parties

Media freedom and development

Georgia has a freedom of information law and reports of violence against journalists are rare in contrast to several other Eastern European and South Caucasus countries. Nonetheless, media freedom and development have become areas of increased attention for international donors over the last two years. Although Freedom House figures have not reported a substantive negative trend in their assessment of independent media over the past few years,¹⁵ there is some concern, principally regarding television. Statistics show that television is by far the most influential medium of information transfer.

A negative trend in media related issues, especially concerning TV stations, has been noticeable since the opposition protests of November 2007 and seems to have worsened during the August 2008 war over South Ossetia when the media was increasingly used by the government for propaganda purposes. In November 2007 when police violently dispersed demonstrations, the Imedi TV station of millionaire businessman Patarkatsishvili – who planned to challenge Saakashvili – was closed during a state of emergency, as along with the smaller Tbilisi TV station Kavkasia.¹⁶ The Imedi station was allowed to broadcast again one month later (although political programmes could not be shown), following the intervention of EU and OSCE representatives who argued that this situation would affect the Presidential elections planned for January 2008. Later, Imedi journalists decided to stop broadcasting out of protest against its owner. After Patarkatsishvili's unexpected death people close to the government bought Imedi: the new owners cannot currently be characterised as independent or ready to criticise the government.

The two other national TV channels – the public channel 1 and Rustavi 2 – also have, to different extents, links with government officials. The government grip on the media and polarisation between the powers that be and the frustrated opposition have hindered the development of an independent media; one that can distinguish between ownership of media outlets and professional independent journalism. The government has made several proposals and promises to improve the situation. A substantial upgrade of Georgia's second public channel is planned: it is currently restricted to Tbilisi but should be made national and with a specific focus on political issues and debate. A parliamentary committee of representatives from the government party and the opposition are supposed to finalise the project, but funding seems to be scarce.

¹⁵ Freedom House, *Nations in Transit* 2008, p. 234.

¹⁶ Elsa Vidal, 'Georgia: News media and press freedom badly hit by partisan struggles', in Adam Hug (ed.), *Spotlight on Georgia*, The Foreign Policy Centre (London 2009), p. 41.

One of the two small independent TV stations, Maestro, which for now only broadcasts in Tbilisi, was recently acquired by Erosi Kitsmarishvili. Kitsmarishvili helped bring Saakashvili to power when he was co-owner of the critical Rustavi 2 channel (which is currently pro-government), and until last year he was Georgia's Ambassador to Moscow.¹⁷ He hints at performing the 'revolution trick' again but now against Saakashvili, arguing that there is a need for critical reporting while being open to opposition party funding. It is questionable whether freedom of media and quality reporting is served by this initiative and if international donors will help him expand Maestro.

Training of journalists and assistance in either setting up or strengthening independent media outlets remains important in Georgia. USAID concluded its media programme in 2005, being satisfied with media development at the time. It is now planning a substantial new programme for 2010 and beyond. The EU has also supported media projects and is likely to look favourably upon new initiatives within the EIDHR. Not many other donors have been active in support to media freedom and development, with little or no funding available from most EU member states. The UNDP is also not engaged.

Table 2: Selection of current media projects

Donor	Project/engagement	Timeframe/Budget
European Union	Eurasia Partnership Foundation with the Georgian Young Lawyers' Association and the Georgian Association of Regional Broadcasters: <i>Strengthening the Media's Role as a Watchdog Institution in Georgia</i> is designed to increase public access to high quality, professional, independent information in Georgian national and regional media.	Ongoing
European Union (EIDHR)	IWPR, UK: Cross Caucasus Journalist Network: Strengthening civil society dialogue and increase freedom of expression.	EUR 956,763 2007–2010
European Union (EIDHR)	CIPDD Caucasus Institute for Peace, Democracy and Development: Independent Media for Civic Integration: Development of independent media through improving professionalism, raising awareness among journalists and internet access.	EUR 479,576 2007–2010
Open Society Georgia Foundation (OSGF)	Media Support Program: focusing on media independence; online media; regional media; media associations & media freedom advocacy; quality media production.	2009–2011
USAID and Friedrich Ebert Stiftung	The UN Association of Georgia: Civil Georgia: daily news online service	Core-funding
The Netherlands (MATRA)	Radio Netherlands Training Centre, Media Development Center (Bulgaria) and Internews Georgia: training project on enhancement of civil society through improving informational and educational role of electronic media.	EUR 618.088 2006–2009
Konrad Adenauer Stiftung	Media Development Programme focusing on training local media and on management training in media.	ongoing

Coordination of renewed efforts in support of the media field is largely absent but should be initiated by the EU Commission and US who are the most substantial donors with political leverage and monitoring capacity. This might also be an opportunity to devise a longer-term strategy for media development to enhance its

¹⁷ Giorgi Lomsadze, 'Georgia: Former TV tycoon plans new channel to challenge government', Eurasianet, 3 December 2009.

sustainability. Among civil society the Open Society Georgia Foundation is the most influential player and is likely to take up a coordinating role that includes recipient organisations.

Donors and civil society organisations need to look into new ways of training journalists, who often leave the country for better jobs elsewhere (including Russia) once they have received proper training from institutions such as Internews. In this sense helping media outlets – which are essentially both part of civil society and businesses that need to be profitable – to be able to secure good journalists for longer periods is important.

Political party development

Georgian politics is heavily polarised. The government party, the United National Movement, has a vast majority in Parliament and the only opposition party represented in the legislature is the Christian Democratic Party and a few independent politicians. Several other political parties chose to engage in street protests, leaving their seats in parliament vacant. The first massive demonstrations organised by the opposition that took place in the summer and autumn of 2007 failed to oust President Saakashvili. The demonstrations were forcibly disbanded in November, prompting a constitutional crisis and early elections. In spring 2009, eight months after the war, renewed demonstrations took place; opposition forces believed that growing resentment of Saakashvili in the West and the defection of several officials from the government could help them achieve their goal of the president's resignation.¹⁸ The opposition, which is divided and based on individual leaders, has been unable to transform the public's discontent with the war into an attractive alternative for change. The one-sided protests have been largely confined to Tbilisi since most opposition parties lack structures and thus support in Georgia's regions. The lack of vision and often offensive and aggressive behaviour of the protesters (some of them paid by political parties to stay in the street) have annoyed international donors, who have been critical of the opposition for not taking up their seats in Parliament. Several ambassadors spoke out when the parliament building and a police station were attacked by protesters.

One reason for the lack of unity and a programme for change by the opposition is the personal animosity that most opposition leaders harbour towards President Saakashvili. Examples include Salome Zourabichvili, a former foreign affairs minister who now heads Georgia's Way party; Nino Burjanadze, a former speaker of parliament and two-time acting president who now leads the Democratic Movement – United Georgia; and Giorgi Khaindrava, a former minister of conflict resolution.¹⁹ Opposition leader Iraki Alasania, a former Ambassador to the UN, who heads the Our Georgia – Free Democrats Party, is regarded as more moderate in his approach and hesitant in participating in street protests. The opposition has been a grouping of parties that constantly shift positions, build alliances and then break them up. Besides the United National Movement and all the ad hoc opposition coalitions, there are a number of parties that have a track record but would need further assistance to develop a party structure, programme and increased links with constituencies: the Christian Democratic Party; the Conservative Party; the Industrialist Party; the Labour Party; the New Conservative Party; and the Republican Party.²⁰

The opposition's choice to leave Parliament and make their point through street protests has both been a cause and effect of insufficient political party development in Georgia. The boycott was prompted in the first place by the limited opportunities opposition parties had in a political environment where things are decided by the President and his political party. This led to frustration among opposition leaders. Meanwhile, the United National Movement is gathering strength and is especially popular in the countryside where it has established offices. The weakness of the opposition serves the UNM well, and some believe Georgia is heading towards a one-party system.

While the government sits back and watches the opposition fight among itself it has also made a few positive steps by increasing funding for political parties, including those that walked out of Parliament, and by setting up and funding a foundation meant to link parties to civil society organisations in order to create opportunities for capacity-building.

International assistance in strengthening Georgia's political landscape has largely failed. The fault for this is two-sided. Georgian political parties have taken only minimal interest in training programmes and

¹⁸ Cory Welt, 'Still Staging Democracy. Contestation and Conciliation in Postwar Georgia', p. 196.

¹⁹ Giorgi Lomsadze, 'Georgia: Former TV tycoon plans new channel to challenge government', *Eurasianet*, 3 December 2009.

²⁰ For more information on political parties of Georgia see Ghia Nodia and Álvaro Pinto Scholtenbach (eds.), *The political landscape of Georgia* (Delft: Eburon Academic Publishers, 2006).

participation in projects. One commentator argued that only the Christian Democratic Party takes a genuine interest in external programmes since most parties are formed by populist leaders and ambitious youngsters who want immediate success, rather than being prepared to wait for it. Another expert engaged in a political party development project for young party members said that the turnout in participation was disappointing, with half of the enlisted participants failing to attend. Because the opposition parties have lost most goodwill and have a reputation for being populist, ill-structured, badly organised, lacking an ideological basis and not represented outside the capital, these parties have difficulty linking up with 'counterparts' in Western countries. Meanwhile assistance to political party development – that should be distinguished from the many international projects for Parliament and on electoral participation and reform – has not been structured or coordinated by the donors involved. After the relatively small number of organisations involved and funding available, another problem is the different institutional interests of donors, who are often affiliated to a political party in a Western country.

Table 3: Selection of donors and organisations engaged in political party development

Organisation	Focus and activities
International Republican Institute (with support of USAID)	1. Training on message development, strategy, management and grassroots organisational development. 2. Promotion of youth participation within parties and encouragement of viable political youth entities that are independent from their parent organisations. Facilitation of exchanges between youth leaders in Georgia and youth leaders from neighbouring countries.
Friedrich Ebert Stiftung	1. Reform of Georgian party and foundation systems with the aim of providing input for reforming the political party system. Partner: Parliament (2009). 2. School of Political Parties' Programmes with the aim of training members of political parties on party programmes and political schools of thought. Partner: Young Republican Institute (2009).
Konrad Adenauer Stiftung	Political Party Cooperation Programme focusing on regional development of party structures and on programme development. Works with the different political parties, principally the ruling party.
Friedrich Naumann Stiftung	Works with the Georgian Republican Party through small capacity-building initiatives and organising workshops and seminars.
United Kingdom	Support to a political party education/training programme implemented by the Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies (GFSIS).
The Netherlands	MATRA Political Parties Programme: supports small twinning projects between Dutch and Georgian political parties.
OSCE/ODIHR and NIMD with Canadian and US funding	The Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (NIMD) worked with the Caucasus Institute for Peace, Democracy and Development (CIPDD) on a research and dialogue project with Georgian political parties. One specific goal was to enhance party-constituency/voter relations. Project ended in 2008 as a result of parties leaving Parliament and the OSCE's withdrawal from Georgia.
UNDP Georgia	UNDP implements a project on developing capacities for democratic institutions for fair electoral processes and active civil participation. Through this project UNDP also works with political parties.

The spring 2009 protests have put several projects and funding on hold. Previously, the OSCE, in cooperation with the Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (NIMD), had tried to coordinate efforts and streamline activities through a meeting of relevant donors that aimed to evaluate projects and carry out a needs assessment. With the OSCE's departure from Georgia and NIMD's project coming to an end, new actors will need to fill this role. Most active seem to be the International Republican Institute (IRI) and three of the four German Stiftungen present in Tbilisi, who might take on the challenge. If they take up the challenge they should do so in cooperation with the CoE, EU or UNDP who are represented at the regular Ambassadors

coordination meetings.

Now that the dust has settled in Tbilisi (for the time being) there might be an opportunity for increased attention to issues such as strengthening a positive political culture (based on substance rather than individuals); helping to build parties' programmatic capacities, training local party trainers; closing the gap between political parties and the general public through civic education and involvement of civil society; and promoting and organising political debates on targeted issues.²¹ Meanwhile donors will need to be flexible in programming and critically assess what they fund while political parties will have to clearly express their needs.

Political party assistance is important but likely to remain problematic, as one commentator argued. Donors need to ensure that the government gives equal opportunity to political parties. Once there is a base of viable parties, increased assistance should be forthcoming. In the current situation, one runs the risk of funding marginal parties that would otherwise have withered away through a natural process.

Support to political parties can however not be seen separately from assistance to parliament, electoral reform programmes and media freedom and development. Successful linkages between these subjects will be crucial to the success of donors' programmes and especially important for Georgia's democratic reform. As a result, the international community will closely monitor the May 2010 municipal elections and look ahead to Parliamentary and Presidential elections in 2012 and 2013 respectively.

Conclusion

Compared with its South Caucasus neighbours and some Eastern European countries Georgia still offers a fairly rosy picture in its willingness and capability to undergo democratic transformation. Six years after the Rose Revolution, one and a half years after the brief war with Russia and half a year after mass demonstrations, Georgia has regained a good level of stability. It is essential that President Saakashvili and his team keep their promise of a new wave of democratic reform. If promises are not kept and progress slows over the coming year, the outlook will become bleak.

There is no shortage of external assistance to Georgia's democratic consolidation. Only the Western Balkans (until a few years ago) and perhaps Ukraine could boast more funds and actors specifically targeting democratisation. Some argue that the West is spoiling the Georgian government by providing substantial funds and demanding little guarantees in return. Influential outside donors could increasingly use political leverage to guarantee Georgian compliance with previously set reform targets. Still, there are threats to Georgia's democratic development. After the war, quick membership of NATO is no longer on the cards, which might temper enthusiasm for reform. The small chance of renewed hostilities over Abkhazia and South Ossetia is another threat to democratic reform.

Due to the number of actors involved, donor coordination has proven difficult in Georgia. The EU has stepped up presence and funding in Georgia while the US remains the largest donor. Increased coordination by these actors will be essential to avoid overlap. Brussels and Washington will have to develop a long-term strategy of democracy assistance while setting-up coordination structures. A joint Georgian government-donor community roadmap or strategy would be helpful since it would help match demand and also serve as a reference point during implementation. Support to Georgia's ministry of finance will be important in order for them to take on a central coordination role.

Donors will have to avoid linking democracy support programming to the news of the day. Most donors switched from civil society to government support, to later discover that attention to both is important. Some donors quickly set up media programmes without much coordination: this may prove counterproductive. Attention to all sectors of democratisation is warranted since they are intertwined. Recent increased attention to media freedom and development is important since this sector is still problematic; even though some

²¹ Some of these suggestions are based on a meeting report by the OSCE and Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (NIMD), which organised a Political Parties Assistance meeting in Tbilisi on 6 October 2008.

donors had closed the book believing all was in good order. Meanwhile assistance to political parties needs to be rethought. Having failed to achieve positive results over the last few years, donors will have to coordinate efforts and plan new initiatives closely with the recipient parties.

Georgia could still be a success story of twenty-first century democratisation if recipients and donors do not treat the issue as 'business as usual'. A coordinated effort linked to political conditionality should be further developed in order to fulfil the Rose Revolution's objectives of integration, economic development and democratisation.

Appendix: Country Report Methodology

Scope and aims of this report

This report assesses external democracy assistance in one country according to the views of local democracy stakeholders.

The report does not aspire to provide an exhaustive record of external democracy assistance to the country in question. Neither does it aspire to be a representative survey among local civil society at large. The scope of this project allows reports to provide only a rough sketch of external democracy assistance to the country assessed, and of the tendencies of local civil society activists' views on the latter.

Sample of interviews

The report's findings are based on a set of personal interviews that were carried out by the author between spring and autumn 2009.

For each country report, between 40 and 60 in-country interviews were carried out. The mix of interviewees aimed to include, on the one hand, the most important international donors (governmental and non-governmental, from a wide range of geographic origins), and on the other hand, a broad sample of local democracy stakeholders that included human rights defenders, democracy activists, journalists, lawyers, political party representatives, women's rights activists, union leaders and other stakeholders substantially engaged in the promotion of democratic values and practices in their country. Wherever possible, the sample of interviewees included representatives from both urban and rural communities and a selection of stakeholders from a broad range of sectors. While governmental stakeholders were included in many of the samples, the focus was on non-governmental actors. Both actual and potential recipients of external democracy support were interviewed.

Donors

The term 'donor' is here understood as including governmental and non-governmental external actors providing financial and/or technical assistance in the fields of democracy, human rights, governance and related fields. Among all the donors active in the country, authors approached those governmental and non-governmental donors with the strongest presence in this sector, or which were referred to by recipients as particularly relevant actors in this regard. An exhaustive audit of all the donors active in this field/country is not aspired to as this exceeds the scope of this study. While many donors were very open and collaborative in granting interviews and providing and confirming information, others did not reply to our request or were not available for an interview within the timeframe of this study. While we sought to reconfirm all major factual affirmations on donor activities with the donors in question, not all donors responded to our request.

We do not work to a narrow or rigid definition of 'democracy support', but rather reflect donors', foundations' and recipients' own views of what counts and does not count as democracy assistance. The fact that this is contentious is part of the issues discussed in each report.

Anonymity

External democracy assistance to local activists is a delicate matter in all the countries assessed under this project. It is part of the nature of external democracy assistance that local non-governmental recipients, especially when openly opposed to the ruling establishment, fear for their reputation and safety when providing information on external assistance received to any outlet that will make these remarks public. In a similar vein, many donor representatives critical of their own or other donors' programmes will fear personal consequences when these critical attitudes are made public on a personal basis. In the interest of gathering a maximum of useful information from our interviewees and safeguarding their privacy and, indeed, security, we have ensured that all interviewees who requested to remain anonymous on a personal and/or institutional basis have done so.

Interview methodology

In order to carry out field work, authors were provided with a detailed research template that specified 7 areas of focus:

1. A brief historical background and the state of democracy in the country;
2. A short overview of donor activities;
3. A general overview of local views on impact of democracy aid projects on the micro, meso and macro levels (including best practices and variations of the local and international understandings of the concept of 'democracy');
4. Local views on specific factors that have weakened the impact of democracy aid;
5. Local views on diplomatic back-up to aid programmes (including conditionality; diplomatic engagement; donor coordination; relevance, quality, quantity and implementation of programmes, etc);
6. An illustration of the above dynamics in one or two key sectors of support;
7. A conclusion outlining the main tendencies of local views on external democracy assistance.

Along these lines, semi-structured one-on-one interviews were carried out by the authors in the country between spring and autumn of 2009.

Key sectors of support

Transitions to democracy are highly complex political, economic and social processes. No study of this scope could aspire to fully justice to them, or to external assistance to these processes. Aware of the limitations of our approach, we have encouraged authors to let their general assessment of local views on external democracy support be followed by a closer, slightly more detailed assessment of the dynamics in one or two key sectors of support. These were chosen by the respective authors according to their estimated relevance (positively or negatively) in the current democracy assistance panorama. In none of the cases does the choice of the illustrative key sectors suggest that there may not be other sectors that are equally important.