



Project Report
Assessing Democracy
Assistance

Assessing Democracy Assistance:

Bosnia¹

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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.

Bosnia and Herzegovina (Bosnia hereafter) represents a classic example of a post-conflict society in which the international community has retained ample executive powers. The Dayton Peace Agreement, which put an end to the Bosnian conflict in 1995, created a highly decentralised power sharing arrangement comprised of two entities, namely the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republika Srpska (RS). The Dayton Framework also served to establish the three largest ethnic groups (Serbs, Croats and Bosniaks²) as 'constituent peoples' and granted them multiple veto points in the decision making process; including the so-called 'entity voting', whereby only ten deputies from the RS may potentially block any legislative decision taken at the state level. The complexity of the resulting decision making process has crippled the system, subjecting it to practices of mutual inter-ethnic intransigence while undermining the externally led state building process in place since the 1990s. The High Representative (HR), the international envoy created by Dayton to monitor the implementation of the peace agreement, has extensively used his capacity to impose decisions and dismiss officials in an effort to maintain the state's functionality. However, the use of his extraordinary powers, the so-called Bonn powers, has greatly diminished since 2006.

Bosnia represents a complex case for democratic assistance given that conflicting dynamics are intertwined with the efforts at state building. Almost fifteen years after the war, Bosnia remains caught in the stages of post-conflict and transitional political development. The intrusive nature of the international community's presence in Bosnia has also

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² In the present report, this term is used to refer to Bosnian Muslims.

created tension since the executive powers have often clashed with the democratic process. Some have gone so far as to label Bosnia 'an international de facto semi-protectorate'.³ While the process of EU integration, which has been 'ongoing' since 2000, has served to bring these components together under a single reform framework, namely the Stabilisation and Association Process (SAP), European incentives have not been enough. Despite two decades of international involvement and more than USD 14 billion in foreign aid, there is a sense of 'unfinished business', as voiced by many of the locals interviewed for this research.

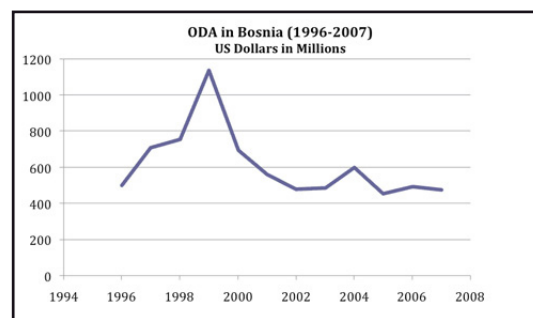
This report provides an overview of local perspectives on democratic assistance in Bosnia. Given the nature and scope of this research, this report does not attempt to provide a comprehensive analysis, but rather it aims to shed light on the practice of democracy building from a local perspective, highlighting some of the salient lessons learnt. The document is divided into four sections: the first provides an overview of the external assistance to Bosnia; the second section is devoted to local views on the practice of democracy assistance in the country; the third focuses on one particular sector (media development); and the final section offers summary findings and concluding remarks.

Overview of donor activities

Bosnia has been the recipient of one of the most extensive post-conflict aid packages in the modern era. For purposes of comparison, Germany received more money in absolute terms between 1946 and 1947 (USD 11.6 billion), but the 4.5 billion committed to Bosnia during the five-year Priority Reconstruction Program⁴ represents the highest per capita amount, at USD 1400 per person.⁵ Aid allocations during the Priority Reconstruction Program were devoted to post-conflict reconstruction, and particularly 'to reconstruct[ing] war-damaged physical assets, jump-start[ing] economic recovery, attract[ing] home the millions of refugees and displaced, and build[ing] a framework for sustainable growth.'⁶ While aid allocation from 2000 onwards has diminished, and exact figures are difficult to tabulate, it is generally agreed that the international community invested approximately USD 14 billion between 1995 and 2007.⁷

Figure 1 demonstrates the external assistance trends in Bosnia since 1996, according to Official Development Assistance (ODA) figures. The data shows a clear upward trend in external assistance until 1999. However, a sharp and steady downturn in aid followed the Kosovo crisis. Allocations for democratic development were rather limited during the 1990s, and only increased in the early 2000s (see table 1) as Bosnia initiated the transition from a post-conflict country to a potential candidate for EU integration. Most of the assistance provided during this period was grant-based.⁸

Figure 1. Official Development Assistance (ODA) to Bosnia, 1996–2007



Source: OECD Stat. Creditor Reporting System (CRS) Statistics.
Available at: <http://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=CRSNEW>

³ Council of Europe, 'Honouring of Obligations and Commitments by Bosnia and Herzegovina, report 10200, 4 June 2004, p. 13.

⁴ The initial commitment for the Priority Reconstruction Program was USD 5.1 billion (1996–2000), but it is unclear how much money was actually spent. In January 2009, Bosnian authorities agreed to establish a commission (the third of its kind) to investigate the donations, grants and funds disbursed for post-conflict reconstruction in Bosnia after the war. It is believed that much of this assistance never reached the targeted areas due to widespread corruption and funds devoted to covering the administrative costs of international organisations and staff.

⁵ James Dobbins et al., *America's Role in Nation Building: From Germany to Iraq* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand, 2003). Germany's per capita assistance barely reached 200 USD during the first two years of assistance in constant 2001 USD.

⁶ Timothy Donais, *Political Economy of Peacebuilding in Post-Dayton Bosnia* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2005), p. 92.

⁷ See Patrice C. McMahon and Jon Western, 'The Death of Dayton', *Foreign Affairs* 88/5 (2009).

⁸ See Kristie Evenson, 'External Democracy Promotion in Post-Conflict Zones: Evidence from Case Studies. Bosnia' (Berlin: Freie Universitat, 2009).

**Table 1. Evolution of Democracy Assistance in relation to total aid, 1996–2005
(in percentages)**

Year	Total Aid	Democracy Assistance
1996	100	2.3
1997	100	0
1998	100	3.5
1999	100	1.9
2000	100	2.5
2001	100	5.9
2002	100	4.8
2003	100	10.6
2004	100	11.7
2005	100	11.8

Source: Evenson 2009, based on ODA figures

Total figures for democracy assistance in Bosnia (as well as for other sectors) are hard to validate in light of the number and diversity of donors operating in the country, the differing methodology and reporting protocols, the lack of donor coordination and information exchange, and the absence of readily available data. Efforts to collect and synthesise accurate figures have, however, been undertaken recently, including the UNDP Donor Mapping Exercise, which has been in operation since 2006.⁹ Based upon UNDP's figures, the most significant grant-aid donors in the area of democracy promotion include the European Commission, Sweden/SIDA, USAID, the Netherlands and Norway.¹⁰

Tables 2 and 3 demonstrate that funding in Bosnia has recently moved towards loan-based infrastructure (43 per cent) and economic development (27 per cent). Governance and institution building (such as judicial reform, human rights, public administration reform, local governance and civil society) have received only marginal support (merely 12 per cent of the total aid package). If we include aid geared towards sectors such as conflict prevention and refugee return, then democracy promotion accounts for approximately 18 per cent of total aid to Bosnia. Tables 2 and 3 also reflect a substantial increase in aid devoted to infrastructure, and a downward trend in the provision of grant-based assistance to other sectors such as good governance and institution building (except for assistance to local governance, which has increased from prior years). This suggests that donors generally view infrastructure as the backbone of economic sustainability,¹¹ and economic development as the basis for social and political development. It may also suggest their preference for working on sector areas that are 'technical' in nature and hence less vulnerable to political blockage by the Bosnian authorities. Increased aid to local governance may respond to a similar motivation.

⁹The Donor Mapping Exercise is one of the key activities of the Donor Coordination Forum created in 2005 to 'bring clarity to the work of donor agencies, improve information sharing, and serve as the basis for further coordination efforts' (UNDP 2007, foreword). The information provided in the Donor Mapping Report is based on responses provided by donor agencies in Bosnia and their financial information. The report does not represent a comprehensive account of external assistance but a broad overview of aid disbursements per sector. Total aid amounts should thus be interpreted with reservation.

¹⁰ UNDP, 'Donor Mapping Report 2006', Donor Coordination Forum of Bosnia and Herzegovina, April 2007. Countries such as the Netherlands are currently scaling down their activities in Bosnia.

¹¹As the donor mapping report suggests, allocations towards infrastructure increased substantially from 2006 to 2007. However, allocations supporting development economic activities decreased (UNDP 2007).

**Table 2. Sector Shares of ODA in Bosnia
(in percentages)**

SECTOR	PRE-2006	2006	2007
Infrastructure	13.5	16.5	42.9
Economic Development and Social Protection	33.4	47.1	27.6
Good Governance and Institution Building	16.6	14.2	8.6
Conflict Prevention, Resolution, Peace and Security	10	4.4	5.7
Cross-cutting sectors (Youth, Gender, Refugee Return)	6.3	2.7	4.6
Local Governance*	-	-	4.1
Agriculture and Forestry	5.4	4.5	1.9
Education	2.9	1.2	1.6
Health	2.6	3.4	1.6
Environment Protection	0.6	0.6	1.2
Emergency Assistance	8.8	5.1	-

*Local governance prior to 2007 is included under good governance, as is institution building.
Source: data from UNDP 2007 and 2008, compiled by author.

**Table 3. Sector Shares of ODA in Bosnia, 2006–2007
(in millions of euros)**

SECTORS	2006	2007
Infrastructure	70	238.98
Economic Development and Social Protection	200	153.47
Good Governance and Institution Building	60.4	48
Conflict Prevention, Resolution, Peace and Security	18.8	23.5
Cross-cutting sectors (Youth, Gender)	11.6	8.74
Local Governance*	11.57	22.78
Agriculture and Forestry	19.2	10.93
Education	4.9	9.10
Health	14.6	8.97
Environment Protection	2.7	6.60
Refugee Return	22	16.60
TOTAL	435.77	547.67

Source: UNDP 2008.

Within the area of good governance and institution building, the majority of donor assistance in 2007 was devoted to state-level reform processes (judicial and public administration reform) and local governance reform. Taken together, this represents more than half of the total aid devoted to democracy and post-conflict issues (see table 4). Donor support for these reform processes suggests an interest in supporting institution building based on the SAP: ¹² assistance geared towards civil society, human rights and the media received very little support (less than 6 per cent), a trend that has been maintained for the last two years. Notwithstanding the importance of supporting Bosnian institutions (given the country's inadequate administrative capacity), and the significant achievements of the early 2000s,¹³ the limited assistance provided to democratic development remains a cause for concern. It should also be noted that support directed towards conflict-related issues has remained significant, at more than one third of the total democracy related assistance (see table 4), which suggests that Bosnia has failed to successfully progress from a post-conflict country to a transitional one.¹⁴

Table 4. Donor Assistance to Good Governance and Conflict-Related Issues in Bosnia, 2007 (in millions of euros)

	SECTOR	2007
GOOD GOVERNANCE AND INSTITUTION BUILDING	Legal and Judicial Reform	20.8 (18.8%)
	Public Administration Reform	20.9 (18.8%)
	Civil Society	3.9 (3.5%)
	Human Rights	1.4 (1.3%)
	Other activities*	0.9 (0.8%)
	Local Governance	22.8 (20.6%)
POST-CONFLICT ISSUES	Refugee Return	16.6 (15%)
	Conflict Prevention**	23.5 (21.2%)
	TOTAL	110.8 (100%)

* Other activities include building statistical capacity, the media and culture.

** Conflict Prevention includes: security sector reform, mine action, reintegration and control of small arms.

Source: data from UNDP 2008, compiled by author.

EU allocations have followed similar patterns. As table 5 indicates, there has been a growing disparity between the funds devoted to institution building and socioeconomic development on the one hand, and democratic stabilisation on the other (the latter including disbursements for refugee return, civil society and the media). Even if democratic stabilisation – particularly refugee return – received significant resources under the Community Assistance for Reconstruction, Development and Stabilisation (CARDS) programme in the early years of its implementation, allocations have diminished considerably since 2003. Indeed, funding for democratic stabilisation dropped from around EUR 20 million in 2003 to around 7 million in 2004, followed by approximately 3 million for both 2005 and 2006. Allocations for democratic stabilisation have been mostly devoted to refugee return. From 2001 to 2006, before the IPA came into effect, refugee return received the majority of available resources, while civil society was largely overlooked.¹⁵ For example, refugee return received in excess of EUR 20 million annually between 2001 and 2003, while civil society and the media received less than 3 million in 2001 (and only 1 million in 2003). IPA funding has followed similar patterns, given that its focus is on supporting European standards (see table 6). Political requirements accounted for 26 per cent of total allocations in 2007 and are expected to have decreased in 2008 (final numbers have not been tabulated). Support to the media and civil society has been somewhat peripheral, at 6 per cent in 2007.¹⁶

¹² Both implementing the 2006 strategy for public administration reform and reinforcing the judicial system constitute key short-term priorities within SAP, as does implementing the action plan of the anti-corruption strategy. See Council of the EU, 'Council Decision of 18 February 2008 on the Principles, Priorities and Conditions Contained in the European Partnership with Bosnia and Herzegovina and Repealing Decision 2006/55/EC', *Official Journal of the European Union*, 80/18 (19 March 2008).

¹³ The process of state and democracy building in Bosnia has resulted in key successes in institution building, including the creation of new ministries and other public agencies such as the Taxation Authority.

¹⁴ A Bosnian national working for a western donor argued, 'The problem in Bosnia is that people are thinking about EU integration but at the same time you have to keep focused on conflict prevention'.

¹⁵ The EU allocates additional funding for civil society under the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR). EIDHR was launched in 2006 to promote democracy and human rights in non-EU members.

¹⁶ It is important to note, however, that media received a lot of support in the 1990s, as discussed in the final section of this report.

Table 5: CARDS Program: BiH Allocations 2001–2006 (in millions of euros).

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005**	2006
Democratic stabilisation	37.5	25	20.6	7.5	3.1	2.9
Return of refugees	35	23.5	19.5	7.5	3.1	2.9
Civil Society and the media	2.5	1.5	1	-	-	-
Administration capacity building	14	10.5	12	23.5*	17.4	10.2*
Development of state-level institutions	3.5	1.5	2			
Customs and tax administration	10.5	9	10			
Justice and home affairs (justice administration, policing, border management and assistance to the Chamber of Human Rights)	12.7	16.5	18	23.5	14	8.4
Economic and social development (private sector, infrastructure and social cohesion)	31.2	13.4	2.4	14.1	14.4	21.3
Environment		6.5	10.1	1.4	-	-
General technical assistance	3	-	-	-	-	-
Demining	3.3	-	-	-	-	-
Opening of community program	-	-	-	-	0.5	1
Total	101.8 (105.2)	71.9 (82.8)	63 (72.8)	72 (82)	49.4	43.8

Source: data from the Annual Action Program for Bosnia Herzegovina, CARDS, compiled by author.

* Administration capacity building includes two additional activities in 2004: the SAP Support Facility (budgeting facility) and the SAP Awareness Programme. The allocation under administration capacity building in 2006 is for public administration reform.

Table 6. Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) ¹⁷ Allocations (2007–2008)
(in millions of euros)

	2007	2008 (Indicative)
Axis 1 Political Requirements	12,886.4 (25.9%)	10,504.7 (19.3%)
Social inclusion and refugee return	4,800	
Rule of law	2,636,4	
Public administration	5,450	
Axis 2. Socioeconomic Requirements	12,000 (24.1%)	12,850 (23.6%)
Economic development	7,200	
Social policies	4,800	
Axis 3. European Standards	21,550 (43.2%)	29,550 (54.7%)
Regulatory bodies	12,350	
Preparation for pre-structural funds	9,200	
Axis 4. Participation in Community Programmes	-	1,350 (2.4%)
Axis 5. Civil Society Dialogue	T3,300 (6.6%)	-
Civil society and the media	3,300	
TOTAL	49,736.4	54,254.7

Source: compiled by author using IPA figures available at: http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/index_en.htm

Local views on external democracy assistance

Most local actors interviewed for this research shared similar opinions regarding the impact of democracy promoters at the micro, meso and macro levels. Local actors regarded the impact of external assistance as 'very valuable' and 'fundamental' to the organisation's overall functioning. According to a civil activist, 'without external assistance it would be impossible for our organisation to survive.' Similarly, the director of the Center for Investigative Reporting (CIN) argued that democracy assistance 'is very valuable. I mean, we would not be able to work independently; and that's critical for investigative reporting'. A civil activist also suggested that democracy assistance has been helpful in 'giving us orientation and direction, and showing us how things should be done'. An SDP party official also said that party assistance has been key for parties to be able to function more professionally. 'People from SDP now really know how to campaign in democratic elections, and that's thanks to the training provided by the international community'

However, a more pessimistic outlook was voiced on the progress made within specific areas of democracy assistance. Even if some locals underscored the significance of the assistance provided, especially in relation to the establishment of programmes and organisations that would not have existed without external support,¹⁸ most remained unenthusiastic about the ground level impact. As a case in point, a journalist interviewed for this study indicated that one of the crucial impacts of democracy assistance with respect to media development has been getting officials to deal with the media in a different way: 'When I first started here, if you had a question for an official you submitted a list of questions that he may or may not answer [...] but now we are getting interviews. There has been a huge education going on with officials'. In turn, the move to a more western-style media has served to expose entrenched corruption and triggered the resignation of

¹⁷ IPA replaced CARDS in 2007 as a more simplified financial instrument for EU accession.

¹⁸ A civil activist, for example, argued that 'the impact has been huge. It has promoted local capacity, making people capable of running projects. It has also had a positive impact on society, because the money does not come from the government and gives independence'

judges and public officials. Even so, overall, external funding has yielded limited results in the realm of media development. The journalist noted, 'There were good intentions but there were too many mistakes. It would be wonderful if someone looked at those errors and figured out what to do next time'.

Many believe that external assistance to the political parties has shown limited capacity to change the tenure of the rhetoric. A party official stated, 'There has been an impact on strengthening political parties, but there has been no impact on changing the political discourse. Political parties use the same methods and principles as ten years ago. There is no transparency, the decision making process is centralised, and these organisations are not well developed by any standard. They are well experienced in getting the money but not in changing behaviour'. A human rights activist indicated, 'Any real progress that we have recorded in the area of human rights is actually due to international assistance. We have to be realistic about that. But still we have a terrible human rights situation in the country'.

Similar doubts were expressed when local actors were questioned about the impact of assistance on the overall democratic process in Bosnia. While local activists recognised salient improvements¹⁹(especially in changing the mentality of the populace, passing critical legislation and aligning Bosnia with its neighbours), the negative implications were seen to outweigh the positive. As a civil activist stated, 'this is the only country in the world, perhaps together with Afghanistan and Iraq, where you see a regression [...] in terms of social development. In many respects, the situation is worse than in 1991'. Similarly, the journalist mentioned above suggested that 'there has been a lot of money and commitment, and some excellent programmes, and yet, on the overall, the situation is still bad'. An NDI official stated bluntly, 'The job is not finished here. We're not even close'.

In terms of positive aspects of democracy assistance in Bosnia, local actors assessed the diverse instruments utilised to promote democracy in differing ways.²⁰ Generally, they regarded these instruments as complementary and argued that their effectiveness is contingent upon the stage of social and economic development in the country,²¹ the type and evolution of the counterpart organisation,²² and the particular programme in place. An SDP party official indicated that 'for me, the most positive assistance was the different training sessions and technical support in the election campaigns in the 1990s. We never had [...] a door-to-door campaign in this country, and now it's critical.' A civil servant stated, 'A little from everything is the best way to go based on our own experience. We had technical support, and now we have a fund that donors created. Both instruments have proven very important, especially the fund'.

With respect to civil society organisations, most interviewees agreed that the preferred method of assistance takes the form of financial grants²³ and institutional capacity aid, as technical support and capacity building are no longer required. One civil activist suggested, 'The most helpful form of assistance for NGOs now is money devoted to institutional capacity, which is a problem for all organisations in Bosnia, especially for those that are not welcome by the government, like us'. Civil activists are also amenable to relatively rapid target projects (in order to avoid bureaucratisation), although they favour the long-term engagement of democracy promoters. A local project coordinator argued that one of the projects they had implemented was successful because it had led to an engagement period stretching over 18 months. 'Long engagement is key, especially keeping an eye on the projects after termination, in order to assure continuation'.

Irrespective of the instruments in place, there is a general consensus among local actors that the assistance of democracy promoters is most effective when the following five conditions are prevalent:

¹⁹ Most, however, pointed out that the situation had worsened dramatically in the last two years

²⁰ Some of these include direct funds, technical assistance, grants, etc. Funds can also be disbursed bilaterally or multilaterally.

²¹ Local activists argued for example that training and technical assistance are critical at the initial stages of development in the media and NGO fields.

²² The level of development may under certain circumstances negatively affect the impact of specific programmes, especially in public institutions. A local consultant working on justice issues argued that twinning programmes are not the most efficient at the current stage of development. 'Very often they're short, and their complexity is often underestimated. In the end, the donor providing the twinning assistance comes with a certain view and can't adapt it to the local conditions because there is no time'.

²³ Grants, however, might not be the best for governmental organisations. A local consultant argued that grants (especially to public institutions) could be dangerous at the current stage of development: 'I think we're still not ready for that. The best projects are the ones where you work with them, where you basically walk them through the process, you help them, you monitor and you cooperate. That's the best way. They learn more that way, and there is less chance of abuse'.

1. **Flexibility** constitutes the most valuable asset according to local leaders, especially the capacity to adapt if a programme is not working as expected. Sweden's Aid Agency (SIDA) was singled out as one of the most flexible donors on the ground. The CIN director stated, 'They are really entrepreneurial. They are actually developing new ways that they can copy onto other organisations. They are willing to negotiate; they are willing to export and willing to see if they can actually respond to our needs, and to our requests'.
2. **Pragmatism** and an ability to be 'realistic'.
3. **Willingness to accept risk.** A local activist indicated, 'It's all about willingness to take risks. Bosnia is a special and complex case, and democracy promoters need to be involved in political issues as well as other technical programmes'. It was generally agreed that both the US and the UK are generally more open to taking risks than other western donors: 'The Europeans cannot take risks, except for maybe the British. [Those who are] not constrained by the fear of making a mistake [are] good. And private foundations are better'.²⁴
4. **Transparency and effective communication.** Generally, it is agreed that the more bureaucratically inclined the democracy promoter, the less room there is for effective communication with the local partner.
5. **Optimal synergies between politics and development.** A civil activist suggested, 'With USAID, you know that you have the political backing from the US embassy too, which is very helpful when you deal with sensitive issues. They don't have a problem with squeezing hands every now and then. DFID are not so strong because they don't have so much money, but they also have the political backing, and that's good'.

With regard to the shortcomings of democracy assistance in Bosnia, the views of local actors on the limiting influence of democracy promotion centred on three salient issues: the approach to democracy promotion; specific practices and procedures of democracy promoters; and the substance of the projects in place. The following paragraphs tackle some of the criticisms of the approach adopted by democracy promoters' approach to building democracy in Bosnia.

A short-term focus with no long-term vision: The problem of the 'quick fix'

Civil activists interviewed for this project complained about the tendency of democracy promoters to focus on short-term strategies with overblown expectations. A local activist stated, 'They want to change the country with a six-month project. It's ridiculous. You get 10,000 euros, and you must change the country [...] You need a few years to change something and multiple [rounds of] funding'. In a similar vein, another media interviewee suggested, 'Many donors [...] have one to three year plans for their current interest. They start lots of programmes and throw in a lot of money. Three years later, when the expertise is built and the hard fought lessons learnt, they close the shop and jump to the latest hot area'.²⁵

Emphasis on a 'quick fix' has proven detrimental to democracy development. Local actors argued that this approach has led democracy promoters to undertake projects that are often inappropriate to local conditions. A media representative pointed out that the international community took on too many projects that were beyond Bosnia's capacity following the war. She cited the creation of the OBN (the first cross-country broadcasting network) in 1996 as a clear example:²⁶ 'The international community wanted to establish a network based in Sarajevo with an independent mission before the elections; but it was too ambitious an idea for the period, because it was right after the war. They had to create new networks from nothing because there were no independent networks'. The project ultimately failed,²⁷ and, as our interviewee argued, 'OBN was

²⁴ This is one of the reasons given for why so little has been accomplished with political parties. A local activist suggested, 'Party assistance is very technical, but the real problems, that is, nationalist rhetoric and corruption, are primarily political'.

²⁵ Others noted that a similar approach is used in the reform process for integration in Euro-Atlantic institutions. A local activist noted, 'The international community is rushing a lot. They say you need to do this before June and then if you don't do that you cannot become a member until 2014. So what? Maybe we should not be an EU member. Maybe we are not ready. Believe me. I can play football with Manchester United, but they will crush me because I can't run as fast as they do. I can't play like them. It's the same with this country and the EU'.

²⁶ TV OBN started operating seven days before the 1996 elections. See Soros Foundation/Open Society Fund Bosnia and Herzegovina, 'International Support Policies to SEE Countries. Lessons (Not) Learned in Bosnia-Herzegovina', Sarajevo 2001.

²⁷ See section 3 of this report.

sold with donors' equipment, despite all the contracts [...]. All that effort and money for nothing'.²⁸ The focus on quick fixes with no long-term vision was also argued to have prompted democracy promoters to support strategies that ultimately had negative, and often unintended, consequences for democracy development over the longer term. The substantial support offered to SNSD in the 1990s and 2000s was given as a prime example.²⁹

Several of the shortcomings mentioned by local stakeholders referred to the design of donor's programmes and project in democracy assistance.

Building civil society on a project basis

Related to the aforementioned point is the tendency of democracy promoters to utilise a 'project-based' approach, as argued by a local activist:

'A good number of NGOs were created as a result of the donor need to have local counterparts in order to implement their projects in the 1990s. Famous western NGOs were looking for partners in Bosnia and they created local NGOs. The tricky thing is that by building organisations like that the local NGO is not really aware of the real mission of the civil sector. The main purpose of their existence is to support the implementation of the project of their external partners. Once the partner leaves, they just stay on the field, but what are you going to do now? Many of them just disappeared. Others continued'.³⁰

This methodology, according to local activists, has served to undermine democracy promotion and civil society in two important ways. Firstly, this approach has challenged the link between civil society and the population-at-large, given that 'local organisations are usually tailored to what is asked for in the call for projects' (as opposed to the real needs of the people).³¹ The danger, a Transparency International activist argued, is that you create organisations that have no strategic vision: 'Today it is health, tomorrow it will be elections. But then you are creating a consulting company, not an NGO, and you have a problem, it makes the country weak. You're not serious'. Along similar lines, another civil activist lamented the relatively weak connection between civil society and the broader populace: 'Aside from interest groups, there are no real membership organisations. They're either professional NGOs or interest groups. It's difficult to work in this environment'.³² Owing to these dynamics, civil society is largely viewed as corrupt by both government officials and the general population. As a local activist argued, 'We are still suffering the consequences from the early 1990s. There is still the perception that NGOs are corrupt and paid for by internationals'.

Secondly, this approach has undermined the ability of local actors to build self-sufficient civil society organisations. As a local activist commented, 'How can you be sustainable if they give you money for a specific project and ask you to present all the expenses for that project in detail?' Another local activist stated that 'Most of the time you are focused on achieving the goals that they give you. You don't have time to develop or to think how you're going to develop capacity'.³³ In reference to this project-oriented approach, the CIN director suggested, 'Most of the organisations are getting too dependent on the donors and they don't think about sustainability'.

²⁸ Around EUR 20 million are believed to have been invested in OBN (Soros Foundation 2001, op. cit.).

²⁹ A PDP official stated, 'Dodik was the favourite guy when he was in opposition and the international community invested too much energy to support him. But you cannot behave like that. You need to have a more balanced, long-term vision. The international community had too many expectations of one man and it didn't work'.

³⁰ According to some estimates, there are around 8000–9000 NGOs registered in Bosnia, including parties and religious organisations (UNDP 2007, op. cit.). Estimates of active NGOs in Bosnia are harder to determine. UNDP suggests that between 1000 and 4500 NGOs are active. UNDP notes that 'the baby-boom' of NGOs in Bosnia occurred after the war as a result of available funds and scarce local employment opportunities (ibid, p. 79)

³¹ This situation is somewhat reminiscent of the relationship between political parties and society in Bosnia. The provision of executive powers to the international community in Bosnia has prompted the creation of an 'upward' accountability chain in which parties are accountable to the international community rather than to civil society. See David Chandler, *Faking Democracy after Dayton* (London: Pluto Press, 2000) and Gerald Knäus and Felix Martin, 'Travails of the European Raj', *Journal of Democracy* 14/3 (2003), pp. 60–74. The connection between civil society and government is equally weak.

³² In fact, external assistance to civil society has been almost exclusively provided to institutionalised NGOs that have the capability to manage the resources provided by donors. UNDP notes that such definition of civil society is narrow, as it does not consider indigenous grass-roots organisations. Furthermore, many locals complained about the tendency of democracy promoters to rely on the same favourite organisations.

³³ Recently, some donor organisations (i.e. USAID and the European Commission) have developed initiatives to promote the sustainability of civil organisations and to strengthen the link between civil society and the government. This support, however, is still limited and some civil activists argued that donor efforts had often clashed.

The focus on measurable results

Local actors generally agree that the demand for quantifiable results on the part of democracy promoters has not been conducive to effective democracy building. They argue that this 'obsession' has served to undermine democracy promotion, suggesting that a result-oriented approach creates an overly optimistic assessment of the situation on the ground. A local consultant asserted that 'a result-oriented approach is a very good thing, but sometimes it can have negative effects. Some people may feel the pressure to produce results, to show them, even if results are not possible at that point. I'm not saying that people would fabricate data but sometimes you are overly optimistic because there is some general disappointment if you don't achieve what you are supposed to achieve'. One interviewee alluded to the circular implications of this methodology: 'There is a regular process of promising unrealistic change to win grants. Then the winning organisations try to lower expectations. Finally, whatever happens, they declare amazing successes. The donors, who have their own boards and bosses, are complicit in this process, trumpeting the fake success. Then the process is repeated with a new donor and a new organisation trying to solve the same problem'.

The second problem associated with a result-oriented approach is that the focus on measurable data can yield a limited understanding of the overall concept of democracy. Under these conditions, democracy promoters have a tendency to adjust the standards for success in order to be able to demonstrate 'progress'. Many locals argue that democracy promoters are satisfied when new legislation is passed, as this enables them to 'check a box' in their assessment reports. However, 'the fact that the law has changed does not mean that the law has been implemented'. It was also suggested that democracy promoters were more likely to engage in areas of democracy building in which the results were more easily quantifiable, potentially at the expense of more pressing areas of concern. The director of the Center for Security Studies (CSS) indicated, 'Donors like to have a strategy and get some results, but it's difficult to start from scratch, doing things from the bottom up. It requires time, and results do not show immediately. It is easier for them to draft a strategy with the government, set up a commission, give some recommendations, draft a law or a strategy and that's it. Then, from time to time, they will remember civil society and they give money, but it is not a consistent approach. Besides, they always remember civil society when they find a blockage at the political level. That's when they remember that they need to strengthen civil society'. The CIN director also argued that media outlets rarely get the attention of the EU, given that the role of the media in democracy building is difficult to measure:³⁴ 'We never make the cut, because the media is always is the last thing in the list. So you go in as an underdog'.

Finally, local actors reported a predisposition on the part of democracy promoters to actually do the work, instead of relying on their local counterparts (ostensibly in the interest of being able to show demonstrable 'progress'). This was especially true in the realm of public institutions, as pointed out by a local consultant:

'I have observed that some people and some donors tend to do the job for the institution rather than let them do it. It's easier and faster that way to show results, especially if there is no political will to do it. But that is very problematic, because it will not secure sustainability and will create dependency. It's basically totally inefficient and ineffective because locals are not learning. The other danger is that it creates a certain dynamic. If one donor does it that way, then the institution in question will much rather work with the donor that does the job of course'.

Rigid bureaucratic procedures

In terms of the second issue, namely flawed practices and procedures, locals identify several of these which undermine the effectiveness of democracy promotion programmes in Bosnia. The number one complaint (especially among civil activists) relates to the rigid bureaucratic procedures imposed by democracy promoters. A human rights activist explained that democracy promoters maintain a rigid approach: 'There is a whole bunch of supporting documents you have to provide in order to qualify for support, then you have to make manifest that you are capable of undertaking the financial management and that you have administrative capacities, etc. Organisations fulfilling all of these criteria may have no time for fieldwork'.

³⁴As one interviewee stated, 'What good does it do to expose in a country that has low literacy that there is a lot of corruption? How does help democracy grow? Try answering that question, and that's what you have to do when you apply to a grant'.

This rigidity sometimes prevents organisations that do not meet the established criteria from being able to try for funding or respond to calls for tender.³⁵ Lack of flexibility, it was argued, also creates a scenario in which the tangible needs of local organisations are often not being addressed. As the interviewee suggested, 'I tried to ask donors to give us or sell us cheap equipment that they no longer use, but this is something that obviously does not fit [with] the way donors function. It's difficult to create connections like that'. Another interviewee indicated that there is a better chance that a proposal will be considered when you have an opportunity to communicate directly with the donor, but that this is often not feasible.

BOX 1: RIGID PROCEDURES

Representative, Media Center

'We approached a foundation and they gave us 2000 euros to organise an event here. We called three guys from Serbia but only two guys came and when we saw the final list of expenses, flights, etc., we realised we hadn't spent 600 euros. We sent out the final report and budget and said, "everything is ok, but we need to give you back 600 euros that we didn't use." Well, it was a real disaster for them. And for three months it was a headache for us. So the conclusion is that it's better to spend the whole amount.'

Documentation requirements were largely perceived as an unproductive use of personnel resources and, for local organisations, represented a significant burden. According to a local activist, 'Monthly reporting kills the organisation. It's not only monthly, then it's quarterly, half yearly, yearly, and then this is all you are doing for work'. Others argued that there were too many intermediaries built into the process and a lot of money being wasted in catering to the administrative needs of donors. Ultimately, 'only 20 per cent of the funding goes to the actual issue at hand.' Lethargic bureaucratic procedures were also viewed as mitigating the capacity of democracy promoters to respond effectively to conditions on the ground. As a civil activist noted, 'Forget about the formal procedures. If you want to be present in the field and have an impact, you need to be there all the time and be responsive on a daily basis. Of course you need to see how your funds are spent, but don't bother organisations with too much paperwork, don't worry so much about making sure that your logo is there'.

The EU is regarded as one of the worst organisations with respect to their overbearing bureaucratic procedures (The OSCE was also regarded as heavily bureaucratic). One civil activist observed that, 'The European Commission is actually unsupportive because you don't have contact with them at all. You can't even ask how to [complete] the application'. She also highlighted the need for extra funds in addition to the Commission's allocations: 'You receive 70 or 80 per cent from them and then you need 10 or 20 per cent from other sources and 10 per cent from your own money. Most of the organisations do not have that money, and then you have to wait at least six months until you receive this 10 per cent.' Along similar lines, a member of a journalist association commented on the length of time it takes to complete the required project proposals, which may then be rejected: 'We sent a proposal last year and we didn't get any support. Our project proposal was 57 pages long. We once got one project from the Commission. It was a good experience but we spent a lot of time preparing reports and audits. It was very time consuming'.

Non-participatory procedures

Another oft-cited shortcoming with respect to the tactics utilised by democracy promoters was the non-participatory procedures inherent in the design of their programmes. Local actors pointed out the lack of a real partnership between democracy promoters and local organisations: 'International actors have their own projects, their own results, their own expertise, and we are just a component of this process. But, as with our government, we don't have a participatory process of democracy building. They invite us to be part of the consultation process but in the end they find a way to escape, to avoid doing their job. Then, they write a report to show some results. It's a very formal process'. A high ranking official at the Ministry of Justice complained that their ideas are sometimes rejected without them receiving any explanation and stated that 'it's imperative that there is a dialogue'.

³⁵ As a human rights activist stated, 'Nobody talks to the pensioners or to the hunters. They are civil society too but nobody talks to them. So in the end you talk to a very small group of people, acting in a very similar environment, in contact with the world, speaking English, writing papers, becoming well informed. But we don't have the perspective of somebody who is really on the other end of this assistance'.

The lack of dialogue and cooperation between democracy promoters and local organisations is generally perceived to have improved over the past few years. The 'nationalisation' of positions within donor agencies and international organisations is viewed as a positive development.³⁶ However, further input from locals is seen as critical. As a case in point, one civil activist complained that the European Commission is now drafting a strategy for civil society *without* civil society: 'They have an external agency to do this job [...] to develop a strategy for civil society'.

Box 2: PARTNERSHIP AS A MUST IN DEMOCRACY BUILDING

Head of mission of BiH to the EC and former director, BiH Directorate of EU Integration

'In the past, technical assistance was prepared by donors. They would come to the recipient institution, like the head of the ministry, and say: "OK we have this programme, we're offering it to you". Then, the ministry would say: "how much will it be?" "Nothing, it's a grant." "And what do I need to do?" "Nothing, we'll do it for you." And they will come and there will be problems because there is not a need for that specific project. And there will be people, experts assigned to assist but people will see this as a burden, they will try to avoid the experts. Then, you will have a situation in which the expert will work on his/her own, and even sometimes outside of the premises (which is really bad), and then they will come up with a document, a report and they will invite the media, the TV, and that will be it. But such a document or report will not be of much use, because all that matters is what this institution needs at that point. We recommend that democracy-building programmes reflect the needs of the institutions and that institutions are involved in programming, and that when experts come, we establish the principle that we're working together, in partnership. We need to agree that experts are helping to solve our problems, the problems that we have at the time, so that we can ask the expert for advice. We both need to agree. If it's just donors, then [I'm] not sure if the results can be effective and have an impact [...] Fortunately, things have changed and now the Commission and the Delegation are more open to working with us. We have a very active role in programming [...] It's more transparent now, but this does not happen all the time, especially on a bilateral basis. It also depends on the recipient institutions, on how ready they are to be involved and to lead the process'.

Decreasing funding

Decreasing funding, as a result of the current financial crisis and the shift in the international community's attention to hotspots such as Iraq and Afghanistan, was also viewed as a cause for concern. Many local organisations argued that the job is not finished in Bosnia and expressed regret at the withdrawal of international aid agencies in the country:³⁷ 'Now that we have the knowledge, we do not have the resources. Furthermore, locals suggested that the withdrawal of international resources has prevented the establishment of a longer-term perspective with respect to democracy promotion. The other problem cited in relation to funding was the limited availability of local resources and the lack of transparency and public awareness: 'Officially the government spends 60 million euros on civil society every year, which is more than what the international community spends, but that money is given to war invalids, pensioners, etc. The money goes to organisations that support the parties in power'. Local activists complained that the international community has done little to change these dynamics and were pessimistic about the capacity of civil society to survive the next few years.

Furthermore, reliance upon international agencies to implement democracy programmes was criticised in light of the fact that valuable resources are diverted away from local organisations. Local actors suggested that international agencies – including UNDP – can have a detrimental impact upon democracy development, given that they absorb the majority of resources available for democracy building and often supplant local

³⁶ Some other locals believed, that key positions should still be kept in the hands of internationals: 'Bosnia is very ethnically divided and everything gets politicised based on ethnicity [...] if you are Bosniak, Croat or Serb, even if your position is neutral, your decisions will be seen as being ethnically based, and that creates problems'.

³⁷ As a case in point, the Canadian Aid Agency (CIDA) closed its office in Sarajevo in July 2009. Other international agencies will follow suit in the next two years. The US is however no longer talking about graduation dates.

organisations in this process. As a party official stated, 'They are precluding the natural development of governance and government. Also, very often they set up the agenda, an internationally defined agenda. Sometimes it can help but it can be problematic because you're preventing local actors from developing this capacity and assuming the responsibility for these functions'.

Externally defined priorities

In terms of the third issue, namely criticism related of the substance of programming, local organisations complain that international organisations have a tendency to set their own agendas, failing all too often to consider the *real* needs of the population:³⁸ 'Donors just want to pick the easy way' and 'engaging in the pressing problems in Bosnia can be difficult'. Some suggested that democracy promoters have an inclination to address high-profile issues: 'Everybody wants to do something about Srebrenica, but this guy here, in the middle of Bosnia, is dying, he has no electricity, no business activities, and nobody is paying attention to him'. A media activist complained that he received no response to a letter he sent asking why the international community does not pay more attention to public broadcasting when 'they have the obligation to develop an independent public broadcasting system. It's one of the conditions for EU integration. But they only talk about constitutional reform now'.

The fact that many of the decisions are being dictated from remote locations, and by people with an often limited grasp of conditions on the ground, was highlighted by local consultants. There is also a tendency on the part of democracy promoters to try to implement boilerplate solutions. A party official stated that 'they are always trying to apply models that they have used in other countries' and gave the example of the poverty reduction strategy drafted by UNDP, which became the government's top priority, but was not relevant to the country.

Box 3: BOILERPLATE SOLUTIONS

Representative, Centers for Civic Initiatives (CCI)

'The international community has paid little attention to existing local structures, like the local communities of the communist period, an instrument for civil participation. It could be a street, a block, a village; it depends. It was like a unit where people would come together, and they would come voluntarily to solve problems, to advocate, etc. Everybody knew the system and used it. It was like coca cola. So why would you shut down coca cola instead of making it more effective? But, no. Let's bring citizens' supporting cards, a new mechanism system introduced by the World Bank. "Citizens' what?" Nobody understands. But they bring great experts from Tasmania, Ethiopia. They say that they have a great case study in Chile. A total mess. Ten years later we decide that that was a bad idea. Forget Chile, let's bring the local communities back, and we have now created an action plan to reform the local communities [...]. Great, but ten years wasted. This is a small example of the prejudices that internationals have when they come here'.

While neglect for local conditions did not prevent advances in democracy building, the implementation and effectiveness of these initiatives was compromised. Ultimately, many projects were never executed and/or failed to garner local interest. An activist noted, 'Even when internationals come up with a great idea, if locals don't understand it, they won't engage [with it] and the project will fail'.³⁹ Democracy driven by external priorities, as opposed to local need, serves to exacerbate the distance between civil society organisations and the general populace.

What democracy?

Local activists agreed that one of the key strategic shortcomings in Bosnia lay in the limited form of democracy promoted in the country: 'If democracy is about passing legislation that is not implemented, having elections, and having different names on the voter list, then this is clearly not enough'. Other interviewees argued that the international community misunderstood the country's needs and failed to fully comprehend the significant

³⁸ A media activist argued, 'At the moment they support women's organisations and gender issues. After that they will support transparency. They switch areas from time to time and go back and forth'.

³⁹ A western aid official agreed and argued that having the locals on board is one of the key elements for success: 'If you don't have local partners that are willing to adopt new behaviour and take on new ideas, you can't force it'.

challenges associated with democracy building in a post-war society: 'This country suffered a lot during the war and the international community has underestimated the level of trauma. The memories are the easiest thing to recall, and political parties have used that to gain support. This is bad for democracy'. A civil activist indicated that donors have been too accommodating in relation to the ethno-political agendas of political parties: 'Donors see this country as a collection of three tribes and they think they need to satisfy the three parts. In the end it means amnesty for everybody because you have to include three groups. But what about citizens? And what about the others?' Divisions among and between donors and democracy promoters were also seen as undermining the process. A civil activist argued, 'They all come with different (and often competing) views on how to change things in the country'. Another activist noted that, as a result, 'officials use these divisions to do nothing'.

Another major shortcoming identified by local actors relates to the failure of democracy promoters to effectively market the idea of democracy to the population and to increase accountability and transparency at the political level. A party official noted, 'There is no understanding of what democracy is. Politicians don't realise that they are managing the country as if they were managing a company, nobody thinks about employment, about increasing social capital, increasing the level of investment'. Local organisations pointed out that the democratic system has remained heavily impaired, given the lack of social involvement in the democratic process. The problem, an SDP official argued, is that 'all the assistance is focused on urban areas, for the people that live in big towns, for the population that is educated, that can read. That is a basic mistake because 70 per cent of our inhabitants live in the rural areas. Half of the population more or less have only elementary school[ing] and have no jobs [requiring qualifications]. They are trying to live day to day and have no time for big ideas like EU and democracy. What they follow is their local community leaders, politicians, priests, etc. And that's why we have nationalist parties winning the elections for 15 years'.

Promoting democracy in a semi-protectorate: Competing dynamics

While most interviewees recognised that the Office of the High Representative (OHR) has helped to unblock the stalemate in the country and promote stability, there were mixed feelings about its actual impact on democracy development. Firstly, it was believed that the HR's use of the Bonn Powers to dismiss officials and impose decisions sent the wrong message to a population still adjusting to the legacies of communism. A civil activist asserted, 'The international community has created a big problem. They have made citizens believe that change cannot come through the political process, which is the most dangerous thing that can happen. The citizens doubt the political process.' One interviewee reflected on how the good work of the OHR in terms of stability and security has nonetheless been accompanied by serious errors, such as the removal of officials that had been supported in the elections:

You get 100,000 votes and you are sent home. It's very tricky for democracy because donors have done a lot of 'go out and vote' campaigns. Don't forget the background of this area. People in the past didn't have a vote. There was only one party. And it takes time for people to believe that in fact their vote is important. But then, people go out and vote, and these elected officials are sent home. What kind of message is that? You're killing the bull for one kilo of meat. You kill democracy because certain objectives need to be fulfilled.

Secondly, local organisations complained that, in light of the broad influence of the HR, political actors feel that they are accountable to the international community, as opposed to the society that they ostensibly serve.⁴⁰ As a local activist stated, 'Political actors have become used to the OHR because the HR intervenes when they cannot reach a decision'. As an NDI official noted, 'If something does not work, the HR will fix it by dismissing somebody or imposing a new law'. Hence, when a consensus cannot be reached, political actors look to the HR 'to fix everything. As a result, there has never been a sense of accountability towards the people. For politicians, the priority is to please the party and be good to the HR. Citizens are the last priority'.

Donor coordination

The Soros Foundation report entitled 'International Support Policies to SEE Countries: Lessons not Learned'

⁴⁰ This is noted by Chandler op. cit. and Knaus and Martin, op. cit.

(2001) noted that ‘no other place in the world knew of more coordinating bodies with less coordination than B-H [Bosnia]’.⁴¹ Eight years later, coordination is still regarded by local organisations as an issue in relation to democracy assistance in Bosnia. As one civil activist argued, ‘They are trying to coordinate. There are good efforts sometimes, but it’s still not effective. It’s hopeless’.

There have been multiple initiatives aimed at improving synergy in the past few years.⁴² However, most of these efforts have been limited to information sharing without any attempt to develop a cohesive strategy, local actors suggested. While locals commended the recent initiatives, they felt that inter-agency coordination only occurs on the surface and is only successful on a case-by-case basis. They also noted that synchronisation could only be achieved during the implementation phase, on an ad-hoc basis: ‘Coordination in the design phase rarely happens. Donors have their own priorities and strategic plans and these tend not to complement each other but rather to overlap or (at worst) to undermine each other’.⁴³

Many interviewees conceded that coordination has become highly dependent on both personal affinities and the willingness of local organisations to act as intermediaries for donors. A high ranking official of the Ministry of Justice argued that once the Ministry had developed a reform strategy, coordination became easier to manage: ‘We have succeeded in decreasing donor overlapping by taking the process in our hands. This shows that local actors can play an important role in coordination and communication’. Similarly, a media activist stated, ‘At the beginning of the year we present our activity plan and send it to our donors and they choose the parts that interest them. We are very transparent with our budget and our activities and it has been very good for donor coordination’. With respect to personal affinities, a local consultant argued, ‘I invested a lot of time in coordination and cooperation. It made my work much more difficult. For example, we started the justice reform project and in a year or two an identical project was started by another donor, which happened to make a very good team. In the end, after a lot of cooperation, we managed to achieve some synergy but basically it was up to us’.

One of the oft-cited negative implications of a lack of cohesion was the redundancy of initiatives, especially in relation to local organisations and democracy promoters. The CSS director explained the problem that has arisen regarding the establishment of information centres: ‘We established five centres and have workshops in 20 different places in Bosnia to promote the idea of the EU. Almost parallel to that, and within two months, the EUSR [EU Special Representative] did the same, and used more or less 80 per cent of the same localities we were in. Why not different locations? There is no coordination’. Another oft-mentioned impact stemming from the absence of synchronisation was the prevalence of confusing, and at times contradictory, demands by democracy promoters. A local consultant observed that, ‘Recipients complain about donors coming with different demands. One donor comes with the idea to change one piece of the legislation and another comes with advice to change another piece. And that confuses the local institutions. It happened several times in the Ministry of Justice’. The CSS director expressed frustration with the plethora of ideas and wide array of standards: ‘In the area of security sector reform, they all have different definitions and approaches, the UN, CoE, EU, OECD, etc. It is difficult for us. Depending on who is giving us the money we need to adjust and use their definitions’.

Conditionality

Most interviewees regarded European (and international) conditionality as the only viable solution in Bosnia, but lamented the fact that it did not function as expected. As the CSS director argued, ‘Conditionality does not work. We had conditions for NATO in 2006, then in 2008 with the signing of the SAA, but BiH is now worse than ever before. We are blocked. Yes, there are some EU standards, but the broadcasting conditions from the 2003 feasibility study, for example, still remain’. The former director of the Office for European Integration

⁴¹ Soros Foundation, op. cit. p. 168.

⁴² One of the most notable efforts at coordination was the creation of the Donor Coordination Forum in 2005. The Forum was initially coordinated by UNDP. In October 2008, it was transferred to the Sector for Coordination of International Aid (SCIA) within the BiH Ministry of Finance and Treasury. The first quarterly meeting organised and chaired by the Ministry took place in February 2009. In addition to this mechanism, there exist other coordination bodies that function on a bilateral or multilateral basis for specific local organisations, projects or a sector areas.

⁴³ Drew Sullivan also argued, ‘Donors are often guided by international priorities that sometimes work against other donors’ programmes. At their best, they can prevent harming each other but coordination will always be limited because of that’. Similarly, a Press Now representative argued, ‘Donor coordination happens as a matter of fact out of necessity. First you think that they are your competitors and that you won’t share your plans with them or [that you] will partially share [your] information. Later you see that it’s ridiculous. You realise that you have so much in common and that you can’t do it on your own’.

in Bosnia, identified two types of conditionality in terms of their effectiveness. The first he described as 'project-based and technical' and pointed out that the proper institutions and resources must be in place before assistance can be sought. 'In this case', he observed, 'conditionality is very useful; it creates incentives to undertake reforms'. Secondly, he referred to 'political conditionality, which means fulfilling certain political criteria. The effectiveness of this kind of conditionality is questionable. Sometimes it helps, at other times it can block the reform process'.

When questioned about the effectiveness of EU conditionality in Bosnia, local actors outlined five areas of weakness:

1. **No sticks.** Most local actors argued that conditionality would be useful if there were consequences in the real world when conditions were not fulfilled; however, as one local activist notes, 'in reality the EU uses carrots with no sticks attached'. Local organisations also regretted the lack of follow through vis-à-vis the process of implementation. These administrative failings undermine the effectiveness of conditionality, many argued, 'because laws are passed but not implemented'. As a result, 'the situation is in the end worse than at the beginning'. A high ranking official of the Ministry of Civil Affairs expressed scepticism about the EU's 'wait and see policy', whereby countries are told what they need to do and then left largely to their own devices: 'this does not work in this country. Americans have a much better approach. They say OK we'll say how you can do it and help you do it. The European approach is wrong for this region. Perhaps it is good for Scandinavian countries, or for democracies that have existed for 200 years, but here we need power and muscle.
2. **Inconsistent and shifting criteria.** The EU was regarded as inconsistent in its approach to Bosnia, which, in turn, undermines the credibility of the EU in the eyes of both local actors and politicians.⁴⁴ A PDP official indicated, 'it is okay to get sticks and carrots sometimes, but the problem is that you never know what the next one coming is.' Significant concerns were also voiced with respect to the shifting criteria. An SDP official stated, 'The EU failed with conditionality [in relation to] police reform. They first set up some clear standards but then they [began] dropping them one by one. In the end, politicians said this is police reform, and the EU said, "that's excellent, you just fulfilled the remaining condition for the signing of the SAA"; but we really have no police reform and people have no clue what it is about. You can't behave one day like this and the second day like that. You need to have one line and everybody needs to know what the policy is and what are the conditions. You can't change them'.
3. **Lack of clear standards.** Most locals agreed that EU political conditionality was not clearly expressed, especially in relation to specific institutional or political criteria.⁴⁵ The case of constitutional reform was often cited as an example of this development. One interviewee suggested that the EU has a history of ambivalence with respect to constitutional reform, 'They didn't say what needs to be done, what are the standards and what are not. They didn't send clear guidelines'.⁴⁶ In a similar vein, a former senior figure in the Directorate for European Integration, stated that, while sometimes European politicians question Bosnia's acceptance into the EU given the current constitution, 'it would help to have a better understanding of the requirements [...] to have a more general discussion'.⁴⁷
4. **No immediate benefits.** A frequently mentioned shortcoming of EU conditionality was that

⁴⁴ This is generally referred to as the 'moving target' problem, which was also prevalent in the process of EU accession in Central and Eastern Europe (see for example, Heather Grabbe, 'European Conditionality and the Acquis Comunitaire', *International Political Science Review* 23/3, pp. 249–68 (2002) and Judith G. Kelley, *Ethnic Politics in Europe: the Power of Norms and Incentives* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004). This problem has been somewhat compounded in the Western Balkans as a result of the addition of a 'stabilisation stage' within the process of EU accession, where new, and somewhat more intrusive, conditions apply (i.e. cooperation with the Hague tribunal, police reform, etc).

⁴⁵ This problem, prevalent too in Central and Eastern Europe, is related to the extensive diversity in EU practices (see for example James Hughes, Gwendolyn Sasse and Claire Gordon, *Europeanization and Regionalization in the EU's Enlargement to Central and Eastern Europe* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004)

⁴⁶ Author's personal interview in Sarajevo in May 2007.

⁴⁷ Author's interview in Sarajevo in July 2007. Constitutional reform is not a condition but a key priority to be accomplished in the 'next few years' (Council of the EU, 'Decision on the principles and conditions contained in the European Partnership with Bosnia and Herzegovina and repealing decision 2006/55/EC', COM 2007, 657, 6 November 2007). The EU has remained somewhat unclear as to what a key priority means and has not provided any specific standards.

the EU requires whole systems to be changed, without providing any immediate benefits. A civil activist gave the example of the EU's requirement for border controls to be established, which was against the citizens' interest at the time, but which the country proceeded to do since it wanted to be part of Europe. The result was not as anticipated: 'in the latest report the EU says that border control is very bad, and, as it turns out, that's one of the big obstacles for us being part of the visa liberalisation regime.⁴⁸ So they are putting very serious conditions on the table for such small or no benefits at all'. Similarly, an SNSD official indicated, 'It's almost 14 years since the war ended and not much has changed. No visas. The economy is weak. And the international community has always had a condition for us. There is always a list of conditions for the next step and nobody sees any benefit. We are still at the bottom. People are losing patience, but the parties are just fine with it'.

5. **Double standards.** The EU was largely criticised in reference to the prevalence of double standards in the region. A PDP official suggested, 'the problem here is that you don't have the same conditions for the entire region. And sometimes these conditions are not even written in Brussels but by people who use conditions for pursuing other goals. These conditions should be more responsibly selected by Europe. Otherwise, European standards can become an obstacle'.

An illustrative key sector: Media development

The media situation in Bosnia offers a good illustration of the limits of democracy promotion. Media independence is consistently being challenged and Bosnia currently ranks 39 out of 173 countries on the 2009 Press Freedom Index compiled by Reporters Without Borders. This ranking is much lower than in previous years (In 2006, Bosnia ranked 21 in the Press Freedom Index). Public officials have increased pressure on media outlets and become more aggressive towards journalists.⁴⁹ Investigative reporting is still hazardous, and the imposition of taxes and fines by public officials has become common practice as a means of increasing political pressure on a rather impoverished media market. In addition, Bosnia's media market is both highly saturated and extremely fragmented. There are approximately 600 public print media publications and 189 broadcasters (45 TV and 144 radio stations) to service a market of barely 3.5 million people. Under these conditions, most media outlets can *only* survive through funding linked to political and/or economic groups. In turn, these groups use the media as a tool for disseminating political propaganda and as a means of promoting their own agendas.

The international community managed to achieve some tangible objectives with respect to the media in the late 1990s and early 2000s, with the dismantling of the state media monopoly and the establishment of a plural media environment.⁵⁰ Internationals also promoted the adoption of legal regulation (such as the anti-defamation law), and established institutions such as the Communications Regulatory Agency (CRA) and the Press Council. The latter represented the first self-regulatory agency of its kind in south-east Europe. Foreign assistance, however, was largely ad hoc, and never featured a cohesive long-term strategy. As soon as Bosnia ceased to be in the international spotlight, many of these developments regressed. Laws that were created were not fully implemented, or were simply ignored by public officials. Some of the most heavily funded private outlets, such as the OBN Network and Nezavisne Novine, were sold to private stakeholders and/or simply became overtly political. The EU assistance provided to public television did not yield substantive results either, and the newly established institutions struggled for survival. The Press Council was nearly shut down in 2005 owing to a lack of funding, and the CRA came under increasing political and financial pressure. Perhaps the most distressing development, however, was the notable return of 'hate speech' in the printed media tied to the 2006 electoral campaign. These elections resulted in one of the most polarised and ineffective governments since the end of the war.

⁴⁸ Bosnia was excluded from the EU visa liberalisation programme in June 2009.

⁴⁹ The ATV manager argued, 'It's definitely not like before, after the war, when they were calling you, sending you people, beating you up. Now they just send you inspections and you have to pay. You need to realise that the government is the biggest employer here. They do the job, they have the money to build roads, schools, and everything. And firms are in a hurry to see who will get the job. If you are working with ATV [an independent media outlet], then they will not invest in advertising for you. That's how it works'. A member of a journalist association argued that local radio stations are the ones facing most challenges. 'In small towns, local politicians are directly influencing the editorial policy of media organisations, especially in Stolac, Trebinje, Mostar, and Livno. Our colleagues in these towns have a lot of problems'.

⁵⁰ The Soros Foundation states that around EUR 70 million was invested in Bosnia for media development from 1995 to 2000 (the EU donated around 16 million; the US 35 million; Soros around 3.5 million; and other organisations around 2.5 million). The total amount of aid is probably much higher. The lack of transparency in the disbursement of funds during this period means a definite amount cannot be established (Soros Foundation 2001, op. cit.).

There has been little political will to remedy the deteriorating media situation in Bosnia on the part of the EU and/or other democracy promoters. In fact, European and US media assistance began to fall away in the early 2000s, and continued to diminish until it came to a complete halt in 2004 (though some limited funding has been provided of late). In addition to withdrawing financial resources, the EU also failed to use its 'carrots and sticks' effectively. For example, the EU tied the passing of a rather sophisticated law on public broadcasting to the process of European integration. Following adoption of the law in 2005, the EU rapidly turned to other priorities (such as police and constitutional reform), and failed to provide continued leadership with regard to public broadcasting. As of today, critical facets of the law are not in place, and many have voiced scepticism as to whether the law will ever be properly implemented.

Media leaders in Bosnia highlighted numerous mistakes that were made with respect to the manner in which assistance was provided, including:

1. Competing views on media development by major donors. Most media activists regarded both the EU and the US approaches to media development as fundamentally flawed and pointed to their often conflicting nature in terms of their approach as to how to reconcile privately-run media with state-run media. The Press Now programme coordinator, for example, outlined how the Americans choose to work on the former while the Europeans work on the latter: 'Americans say if you are private, why should you develop features of a publicly run media? Europeans' approach is the reverse. They say if you are private we will not transform you into public media, we'll take the public media and transform it. According to the Press Now programme coordinator, both the Americans and the Europeans have been limited in their definitions. 'If you have an outlet that has developed features of a publicly run media and is doing a good job, why don't you support that instead of trying to transform a propaganda state media into the BBC overnight? As a result of this, a huge amount of money has been wasted'.⁵¹

The failure of the OBN network⁵² is a clear example of how competing approaches by donors have served to undermine the effectiveness of democracy promotion projects. While OBN initially 'introduced a new light into media communication' in Bosnia and became the first media outlet to cover the entire country,⁵³ both the lack of long-term vision and the competing views on media assistance led to the ultimate failure of the project in the early 2000s. According to the Soros Foundation, the withdrawal of resources 'came as a consequence [...] of the conflicting interests of international donors. Europe gave precedence to the public service, while the USA preferred the concept of developing private media that would be able to fulfil part of the public functions.'⁵⁴ When the donations stopped, the OBN network was left to 'sink or swim' in the commercial marketplace. 'Instead of de-privatising', as the Press Now programme director said, 'it was left to the market and failed. Now OBN is considered one of the biggest failures of media development in Bosnia.' The only affiliate that successfully navigated this transition was ATV TV.

2. No long-term vision and quick fixes. The number one mistake identified by media leaders was the lack of a coherent and sustainable strategy. Training was held up as an example of this development: 'Donors came in with a zillion programmes and zillions of training sessions, because Bosnia was hot, the way Iraq is now. But where are those trained journalists now? People would get the certificate without real results [...] what exactly has that particular training changed? And most of this training was for reporters, but what about the editors and the owners?'⁵⁵ Compounding this problem was the fact that some of the heavily supported organisations were not financially or organisationally viable. Rosemary Armao suggested that both the US and EU were giving assistance to groups that did not have a sustainable business model: 'Money went to anybody who could prove they could put out a product. But the economics of media are well known. You should know that a country that has four million people and is recovering from a war can't support the media here, so why was everybody getting money?'.⁵⁶ Some of the most successful (and heavily funded) commercial media enterprises began to struggle as resources dwindled, and in the absence of a cohesive strategic vision. As CIN Director argued, 'With *Dani* [a weekly magazine created in Sarajevo in September

⁵¹ The ATV manager agreed, 'I [have] had bad experience[s] with the EU because they don't know what to do at all. They have in their agenda that they support public system[s]. The problem is I don't see results of that policy. Support to public media has not yielded any results'.

⁵² As previously noted, OBN was created from scratch in 1996 by donors.

⁵³ Soros Foundation 2001, op. cit.

⁵⁴ Ibid, p. 189.

⁵⁵ A western aid official also recognised that ownership of the media is a key issue in media development in Bosnia. 'It does not matter how many good journalists you have in the country. If they can't get their good material out, there is a problem. It's always very difficult to address the problem of media ownership through democracy assistance [...] we can't do anything about that'.

⁵⁶ Author's personal interview, Sarajevo, 30 June 2009.

1992] for example, none of the donors thought about what would happen once the money was gone. And Dani didn't have to worry about it for years and now it's struggling. They are printing in Zagreb. With so much money from donors they could have made their own printing facility to reduce costs. They didn't need to think about that because the money was coming from elsewhere; and donors didn't think about that either.'

3. Decreasing funds. Media leaders argued that the tendency of donors to focus on international hotspots such as Iraq and Afghanistan has had a detrimental impact upon funding. Locals argued that donors were quick to 'recognise' their achievements in Bosnia rather than consolidating gains and building on progress.⁵⁷ Many locals also complained about the suddenness of the donor retreat with respect to media development, especially in light of the resources that were allocated to this sector in the 1990s and early 2000s.⁵⁸ The ATV manager Natasa Tesanovic indicated that media establishments in the Balkans have suffered greatly as a result and suggested that the sudden retreat and the lack of external assistance produced a very complicated media landscape: 'We now have a terrible situation. You have a public media, especially in RS, which is supported by the government and very connected to the government, and receiving money, taking your people, influencing firms not to advertise with you. It's a very difficult situation. Without some kind of return of donors I don't know how we'll do. We'll be forced to decrease operations to a great extent which will then reflect on the quality of programs, on the quality of the people who are doing investigative research or fully change the mission and become some local entertaining channel, but then what's the point?'

Conclusion

The record of democracy assistance in Bosnia is mixed. At the micro level respondents deemed it to have had a fundamental and substantive impact, but they were more sceptical about the results at the meso and macro levels.

Local organisations considered the short-term approach of democracy promoters and the emphasis on measurable results as detrimental to the democratic process in Bosnia. In particular, they resented the lack of planning in combination with limited resources and inflated expectations.

The focus on measurable results was said to have led to overly optimistic reporting that often had little relation to the situation on the ground. In addition, local organisations overwhelmingly rejected the project-based methodology prevalent in civil society, as this was considered to have challenged the links between civil society organisations and the general populace.

With respect to the tactics used by democracy promoters, the primary concerns of local actors related to the rigidity of the process. Most local organisations concurred that such procedures served to undermine their work and failed to address the real needs of the recipient organisations and the population at large. In this vein, the EU was generally regarded as the least flexible and most bureaucratic organisation.

The lack of coordination between democracy promoters and local organisations was also seen as a significant obstacle and some local actors complained that donors had a tendency to design democracy projects without soliciting local input. Despite recent efforts at improving coordination, the consensus was that there is still a lot of work to be done in this area.

Many respondents suggested that democracy promoters endorse an inflexible vision of democracy that does not align with conditions in the country. They also expressed scepticism concerning the capacity of democracy promoters to fully appreciate the challenges inherent in a post-conflict society such as Bosnia.

⁵⁷ As a media activist stated, I think that some international organisations recognised great success in media law. We have very good law and rules, but there are big discrepancies between the theory and the practice. I think that some organisations in 2002 we made and then they finished all activities in Bosnia but they neglected the practice, the implementation of this legislation'.

⁵⁸ A western aid official admitted, 'We ended our media programme too soon. And now it means that when we get back into the sector, we are going to have to build things again. So that's going to be difficult, especially now; working with lower levels of budget makes it harder to have an effective programme'.

The pervasiveness of the international community's engagement in Bosnia (including the executive powers of the international envoy) was said to have created conflicting dynamics in the context of democracy development. Many interviewees resented the fact that political party leaders felt they were accountable to the international community, as opposed to their local constituents. Furthermore, the use of executive powers to dismiss officials and impose decisions was seen as sending an 'anti-democratic' message to a population that was largely sceptical about the possibility of effecting real change in the first place.

Finally, while conditionality was viewed as an important tool in the arsenal of democracy promoters, many felt that a lack of consistency with respect to criteria, standards and tangible benefits, coupled with the ineffective use of 'sticks', rendered conditionality largely ineffective.

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.