



A Plea for Democracy

Beyond Borders

Defence
Development
Diplomacy
&
Democracy



'Please use *YOUR* liberty to promote *OURS*'

Aung San Suu Kyi, democracy advocate Burma.



1. Preface

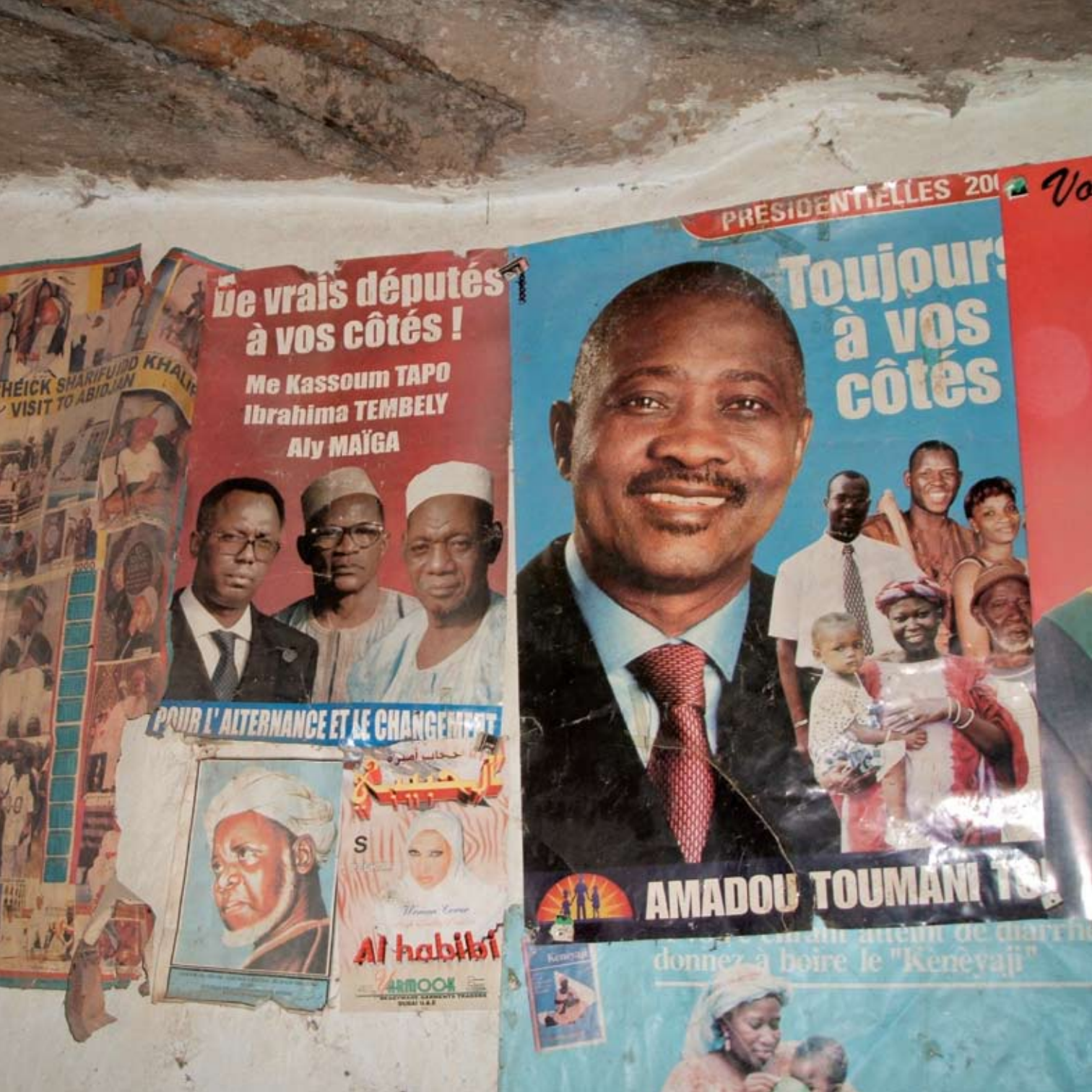
Fostering democracies in other countries is a worthwhile undertaking. On the other hand, it is a difficult mission. Democracy goes hand in hand with prosperity, peace and safety. Also, democracy is the most important tool that enables human rights to thrive. Promoting democracy therefore is an important component of the Netherlands' foreign policy.

By means of the so-called '3D' approach, (Development, Defence and Diplomacy) development cooperation's fields are introduced to their 'common denominators'. However, little attention is being paid to Democracy: the fourth 'D'.



UN Photo/Evan Schneider

'Democracy is not a luxury'



2. People want democracy



- Gallup's worldwide opinion poll shows that 8 out of 10 people regard democracy as the best form of government. In Africa, 9 out of 10 people regard democracy as the best form of government.
- Both the Afrobarometer and the Latinobarometer indicate that the majority of the African and Latin American population prefer democracy to any other form of government.
- For the first time in history, a majority of the world's population experiences the concept of democracy. Seven out of each 10 countries are governed democratically or are well on their way to democracy. More people than ever before are registered to vote.
- Recently, democratic norms and values have been drawn up by several regional organisations such as the 'African Union Charter on Democracy', 'Elections and Governance' and the 'Organisation of American States Democracy Charter'.

Amartya Sen (Nobelprijs winnaar voor de Economie in 1998) :

'This recognition of democracy as a universally relevant system, which moves in the direction of its acceptance as a universal value, is a major revolution in thinking'



3. Democracy works!

Poverty is more than an economic problem alone. Above all, it is an issue that deals with power regarding growth, distribution, public participation, and legislative control. Development therefore harbours a strong political current. That is the reason why democracies book great results in socio-economic affairs.

- In terms of life expectancy, literacy, access to safe drinking water, and infant mortality rate, democracies are ahead by 20 percent to 40 percent compared with authoritarian regimes.
- Over the past 40 years, 95 percent of the worst performing economies were not democratically governed.
- Democratic governments are less likely to suffer economic crises compared with authoritarian regimes.



UN Photo | Fred Noy

Javier Solana in de EU Security Paper (2003):

'The best protection for our security is a world of well-governed democratic states.'

Also, democracy effects peace and safety.

- *'41 out of the 49 countries that experienced civil unrest during the 1990s were dictatorial regimes.'* Agnes van Ardenne (Minister for Development Cooperation, 2005)
- *'Where you have ethnic diversity, unless you have democracy, you are really in a mess.'* Paul Collier (Professor of Economics, Oxford University)
- Democracies do not engage in warfare easily and most refugee flows are the result of authoritarian regimes.
- A violent coup has a considerable negative effect on a country's economic development. On the other hand, a change of government by means of an election is considerably more positive.



4. Democracy's fraught journey

Even though democracy has a positive effect on development and safety, the road leading to development is littered with stumbling blocks. 'Road maintenance' therefore is key.

- **Small, powerful authoritarian elites survive by hiding behind a democratic facade.** Democracy is not a quick fix. Said elites stall opposition parties' ascent, allow corruption to thrive and intimidate minorities. Fostering democracy entails more than offering support for elections.
- **In several countries, legislative power is set up to accommodate one-party governments in which power is centralized.** Constitutional reform is geared toward reinforcing and solidifying democracy with regard to national law, and, therefore, must be actively supported. Said reform process is arduous as it entails the redistribution of power within society.
- **New players of note are emerging on the world stage – such as The People's Republic of China – that actively put forward a different political model.** Western strategic interests do not always go hand in hand with actively supporting democracy elsewhere.



Democracy is more than elections

- **Most post-conflict countries lapse back into conflict.** In certain cases, democratisation actually increases the risk of said lapse. Particularly in these situations, a long-term effort by the international community is essential.
- **Particularly in Africa, expectations regarding democracy run high.** Democracy's rate of success shall diminish if the quality of living standards does not improve. For that reason, fostering democracy may contribute to establishing economic opportunities.
- **Exporting democracy does not work, although existing initiatives elsewhere may be supported in a useful manner.** In most cultures, public participation, responsible leadership and proportional representation are highly regarded. Said principles are not always carried out uniformly. It is vital that local players in society build their own democracy.
- **Development cooperation may upset the process of democratisation in recipient countries.** Increasingly, development aid funds are donated to governments directly (so-called 'budget support'). This requires strong support for financial monitoring institutions in recipient countries. In addition, development cooperation's increasing bureaucracy 'threatens' to disengage democratic institutions in recipient countries.



5. Supporting democratisation – “Beyond Borders”: recommendations

Democracy is a great good. A democracy that works constitutes specific advantages for its population. Public participation and right of say are important civic values. Democracy is closely linked to Development and Defence and represents the political model which guarantees human rights. These three ‘Ds’ actually may offer mutual support. In that case, diplomacy could be instrumental to said goal.

- **Broaden the support for democratisation.** Additional means should be made available to set up a firm, democratic system of checks and balances in partner countries; this can be achieved by supporting local independent media, civil society organisations, national governments, unions, and political parties. It is not the state but the links between the state, individuals, communities, and the market that are central. Civil society in Europe and the Netherlands plays a central role in advancing democracy.
- **Specific attention for political leadership.** A state that serves society is bound by ethical and responsible leadership. In that respect, religion constitutes an important source of inspiration in many societies.
- **Offer additional support for monitoring financial institutions in recipient countries.** A well-functioning democracy cannot last without accountability. For example, proven cases of corruption therefore must result in part suspension of bilateral development aid funds.

- **Respect local democratic institutions.** Western governments discuss long-term development aid with developing countries. Said plans should get more media coverage in the recipient countries. National governments should have the right to approve or reject the development aid projects.
- **Support research with regard to democratisation processes around the world.** Several forms of democracy exist. Different cultures have different institutions and entertain local forms of power, proportional representation and leadership. Democratisation processes should embrace these differences, which means that the Netherlands should not engage in a ‘one size fits all’ scheme.
- **A long-term effort by the international community is key.** Particularly in post-conflict areas, the threat to democratisation is considerable. Safety initiatives as well as economic stimuli and structural political dialogue must be supported. National and civil society players may engage in drafting a fitting democratic model.

A long-term effort
is vital in order to get from
bullets to ballots.



Colophon

The publication before you is a “co-production” of the EFF and the NIMD and serves as a guideline for the two-year programme entitled: **‘Beyond Borders: development cooperation and its dilemmas’**.

In 2008 and 2009, the EFF – by means of the NCDO’s financial support – facilitates several (debating) events in order to contribute to development cooperation’s refocusing on the following seven topics:

- “3D” and Development Cooperation
- Religion and Development Cooperation
- Globalisation and Development Cooperation
- New Donors and Development Cooperation
- Human Rights, Democracy and Development Cooperation
- Agriculture, Raw Materials and Development Cooperation
- Development Cooperation and 10 years of “Millennium Development Goals”

Each topic will be discussed in experts’ meetings, public events and several side events. Please see our website for additional information: www.overdedijk.nl

The EFF organises the following events for the seven topics mentioned above:

Experts meeting

The EFF will enter into dialogue with experts in order to elucidate the content.

Public event

We want to reach the greater public by introducing an easily accessible and interactive programme with notable public speakers.

Side event

Innovating activities - new target groups will become involved.

Introducing a publication.

The results should lead to further discussion.

Join now!

Please subscribe to our online news service via our website so that we may inform you of upcoming events. We hope that you will share with us your experience in development cooperation. Your help and advice will bring seemingly insurmountable dilemmas out in the open and make it a topic of discussion.

Please see our website www.overdedijk.nl

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Participating organisations



The Eduardo Frei Foundation ('EFF') is the CDA's foundation for international solidarity. Together with foreign sister parties, the EFF organises training courses, conferences and facilitates exchange programmes for and with youth. Specifically, the EFF focuses on Eastern Europe and the Southern Caucasus region by means of financial support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' MATRA programme. Each year the EFF puts a country in the spotlight. This year, Moldova is the EFF's country in the spotlight. In addition, the EFF each year facilitates events and conferences with regard to development cooperation.

Please see www.cda.nl/eff for additional information.

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Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy

The Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy ("NIMD") is an organisation in which seven political parties in the Netherlands take part (CDA, PvdA, VVD, GroenLinks, D66, ChristenUnie, and SGP) and supports political parties in young democracies. The NIMD supports political parties' joint efforts to further the democratisation process in their respective countries. In addition, the NIMD supports political parties in building up organisations, develop statements, and improve relations with civil society organisations and the media. Aid offered by the NIMD goes beyond financial support for projects alone as Dutch political parties' expertise and experience are shared as well.

Please see www.nimd.org for additional information.

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