

EVOLUTION OF A.I.D.'s DEMOCRATIC DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

Promoting democracy and respect for human rights has long been a principal objective of U.S. foreign policy and an inherent goal of the foreign assistance program. Since 1982 when President Reagan announced a major United States initiative to "foster the infrastructure of democracy" throughout the world, the foreign affairs agencies--State, USIA and AID--have placed new emphasis on policies and programs that contribute to strengthening democratic institutions. This has been particularly true in the Latin American and Caribbean region, where the idea is hardly new. The present "democracy" program--and many of the ideas that have surfaced for implementing it--have evolved from our experience in earlier programs, such as the Alliance for Progress, which helped put in place or strengthen many of the institutions and networks employed in current programs.

The Legislative Base

For some years foreign assistance legislation has encouraged incorporation of democratic principles in AID policies and programs. Section 102 of the FAA of 1961 stated that a major objective of the aid program was to "help make an historic demonstration that economic growth and political democracy can go hand in hand to the end that an enlarged community of free, stable, self-reliant countries can reduce world tensions and insecurity." The Humphrey Amendment of 1961, emphasized the significance of cooperatives and popular participation in democratic growth, and was followed in 1962 by the Zablocki Amendment, which stressed the role of community development in achieving similar objectives.

Title IX, enacted in 1966, charged A.I.D. to concern itself with political as well as economic development, and gave additional breadth and direction to A.I.D.'s efforts to help develop self-supporting institutional frameworks within which modernization and development can take place. With the introduction in the early 1970's of the basic needs approach directed toward "the poorest of the poor", the policy emphasis on political development per se began to diminish, except for continued assistance to cooperatives, labor unions and private voluntary organizations, within the context of promoting "growth with equity" in economic development.

In 1974, passage of the Harkin Amendment linked Agency policy and programs to concern for protection of human rights, underscoring the basic human needs approach and keying a country's eligibility for assistance to its human rights performance. Enactment in 1978 of Section 116(e) of the Foreign Assistance Act, which sets aside

a portion of A.I.D.'s annual appropriation to be used for studies, projects and activities that promote wider observance of civil and political rights, added a positive dimension to A.I.D.'s efforts to promote human rights.

More recently, the Congress has raised the level of funding set aside for human rights programs worldwide, and gave a major boost to programs to improve the administration of justice in Latin America, particularly Central America, by earmarking significant levels of funding to be used for this purpose.

Administration Policies and Initiatives

The Ford, Carter and Reagan Administrations each formulated policies that strongly reinforced these Congressional mandates. In August 1976, the A.I.D. Administrator announced a program of "New Initiatives in Human Rights", intended to focus the Agency's attention on finding ways to promote greater observance of human rights in aid-recipient countries, thus anticipating enactment of Section 116(e) by two years. President Carter declared human rights to be "the soul of United States foreign policy" and the level of A.I.D. support for human rights projects grew accordingly. The Reagan Administration, seeking to encourage governments as well as opposition groups to work toward advancing freedom and justice in their countries and to create a political and social climate in which respect for human rights could take root and grow, highlighted the Section 116(e) program as one of the major instruments of this policy. Human rights were defined as the fundamental principles of democratic societies, laying the groundwork for return to the concept of encouraging political development through U.S. assistance programs.

In an address before the British Parliament in June 1982, President Reagan declared that the United States would strive all around the world "to foster the infrastructure of democracy--the system of a free press, unions, political parties, universities--which allows people to choose their own way, to develop their own culture, to reconcile their own differences through peaceful means." A.I.D., working closely with the Department of State and USIA, has been a key actor in the process of translating the President's announcement into a multi-faceted foreign policy and assistance program, reflecting both the complexities of the task of democratic development and the commitment of the U.S. Government.

In 1983 President Reagan formed the National Bipartisan Commission on Central America to advise on a long-term U.S. policy that would best respond to the challenges of building democracy and to

threats to security and stability in the region. In its January 1984 report, the Commission concluded that fundamental strategic and moral interests of the U.S. require a long-term national commitment to economic opportunity, human development, democracy and security in Central America. The Commission specifically recommended U.S. support for democratic processes and institutions through assistance to improve the administration of justice, technical training and development of leadership skills.

In response to the Commission's recommendations, A.I.D. and the State Department proposed and requested funding for a five-year program of economic and democratic development in Central America, to which the Congress responded in FY 1985 with a supplemental appropriation. Included were funds earmarked for a Central American regional administration of justice program, additional funds for the judicial reform project in El Salvador (which had had an original earmark of \$3 million in FY 1983), and other funds to be used at the Agency's discretion to develop and support programs designed to strengthen democratic institutions.

Developing Policies and Strategies

The three major channels of funding to support democratic institution building in the LAC region are through the LAC Regional Human Rights Initiatives project; the regional Strengthening Democracy project, confined to Central America; and the Administration of Justice programs. Policy guidelines and strategies for these programs were developed independently, although growing from the same root, and have changed somewhat over time.

Human Rights Projects

The initial guidelines for the Section 116(e) human rights program that were in effect from 1978 to 1982 made clear that its purpose was to stimulate A.I.D. to go beyond activities that were normally carried out in our regular programming and to support new kinds of initiatives that have a significant impact on civil and political rights; and that activities begun under Section 116(e) should, as appropriate, be incorporated into A.I.D.'s regular programming as soon as possible. Support was generally to be provided in response to proposals from private groups and individuals, and stress was placed on international contact and information exchange. Proposed activities should seek to accomplish at least one of four objectives or themes: (1) encourage international contact among people who share an interest in problems of civil and political rights in the context of economic development; (2) encourage investigation and discussion of development successes where human rights are respected, the problems governments have in

promoting economic development that cause them to use repressive measures, and the options available to them; (3) encourage better understanding of relationships among civil and political and social, economic and cultural rights; and (4) encourage defense and support of civil and political rights in specific countries, including dissemination of information and advocacy and aid for disadvantaged groups and individuals.

In 1982 new human rights program guidelines were formulated which made the principal strategy that of strengthening legal systems through such activities as training (in the U.S. or third countries) for magistrates; supporting studies for the reform and implementation of civil and criminal codes; establishing regional human rights commissions and institutions that are independent of individual countries or governments; or supporting programs to educate the citizenry about their rights under the law. Another major strategy was "electoral reform" or assistance in establishing procedures to ensure secrecy of balloting and a fair and accurate vote count.

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In September 1984 the guidelines for human rights projects were again revised to outline seven major objectives: (1) encourage research on and discussion of civil and political rights; (2) encourage the awareness of civil and political rights; (3) encourage adherence to the rule of law through a legal framework conducive to civil and political rights; (4) encourage free and democratic electoral systems; (5) encourage development of democratic principles and institutions that promote human rights; (6) encourage the development of human rights organizations; (7) encourage the increased access of women and ethnic groups to the judicial system and to political processes.

Democracy Initiatives

During 1982, in developing guidance for the President's Democracy Initiative, an interagency group composed of professionals from the Department of State, AID and USIA, working in consultation with overseas missions and the Congress, agreed upon a program with five principal components:

--Leadership Training: programs for development of the theory and practice of democracy, the role of free trade unions and the market economy, the skills necessary to build the institutions of freedom and democracy; and exchange of ideas on problems and issues of common concern to local leaders. (Special emphasis was to be placed on reaching the next generation of leadership.)

--Education: through scholarships, American studies, English teaching, book programs and other means--aimed at conveying a more accurate picture of the culture, character and values of the American people and providing insight into the development of democratic processes.

--Strengthening the Institutions of Democracy: programs seeking to strengthen the basic elements of a democratic society" a free press, free elections, freedom of association, free trade unions, freedom of religious choice and cultural practice, and substantial independence for political parties, business groups, universities, and legal and judicial systems.

--Conveying ideas and information: to engage leaders and future leaders in exchange of ideas concerning democracy and democratic values through active programs of conferences and meetings, dissemination of publications, and the full range of educational and cultural exchange programs.

--Development of personal and institutional ties: involvement of a cross-section of American private and public institutions in the development of closer ties and working relationships between political parties, free trade unions, businesses, educational institutions, state and local governments, women's groups, ethnic groups, religious associations and other groups with counterparts overseas.

It was noted that many of the proposed activities encompassed programs long administered by USIA and A.I.D., including grants to private organizations such as the AFL-CIO and the Asia Foundation, and assurance was stated that this new commitment by the U.S. Government would in no way interfere with the complete independence and continued integrity of these institutions.

The program thus envisioned, and later proposed to the Congress as "Project Democracy", was to be implemented by USIA, A.I.D., State and a proposed new non-governmental entity that was later established (in a form somewhat different from its original conception) as the National Endowment for Democracy.

Implementation

In addition to the regional and country-specific Administration of Justice Programs, funding support for strengthening democratic institutions in Latin America and the Caribbean is provided through two regional "umbrella" projects: the LAC Regional Human Rights Initiatives project, established in FY 1978; and the Central American Regional "Strengthening Democracy" project initiated in FY 1985.

The Human Rights project provides grant funding to national and international organizations and individuals working to promote human rights throughout the region. These grants are made in response to unsolicited proposals from non-governmental institutions, such as universities, private non-profit

organizations, professional associations and human rights groups to support regional programs and activities initiated and carried out principally by nationals of the countries participating. Activities range from a single conference or research project to longer term programs of two to five years. For example, funds were used to support planning meetings leading to establishment of the Inter-American Institute of Human Rights and its subdivision, the Interamerican Center for Electoral Assistance and Promotion (CAPEL), and the project continues to help finance some of their education, research and promotional activities. Other examples include a region-wide program to promote and protect the human rights of Indians; a project to train teachers of human rights at the community level in Central American and Andean countries; and research seeking to determine the conditions and actions that most successfully encourage transition from military rule to civilian constitutional government.

The Central America Regional Strengthening Democracy Project provides funds for activities that seek to foster and strengthen democratic institutions and practices and to promote citizen participation in the political process in Central America. Following the precedent set under the human rights program, it is intended that these funds be used to develop institutions and reach audiences not normally included in other AID-funded programs that also contribute to building democracy, such as assistance to trade unions, cooperatives and PVO's. In other words, the focus is on political rather than economic development.

In addition to financing regional or multi-country projects, funds may also be channeled to individual A.I.D. missions to enable their support to country-specific initiatives that were not anticipated during the budgeting process. The major objectives or priority areas for the use of these funds, identified in the 1986 Central America Regional and LAC/AJDD Action Plan reviews, are briefly described below.

STRENGTHENING ELECTORAL PROCESSES through technical assistance, training and material resources to electoral courts to improve capacity to establish sound laws and procedures, administer elections and carry out measures to prevent fraud; educate citizens about the voting process to increase their participation and raise public confidence in the system; and promote understanding and acceptance by both governments and citizenry of the importance of free and fair elections.

Implementation:

Regional: Support to CAPEL with the objective of building within the region a permanent capacity to provide technical assistance and information to countries seeking to improve their electoral systems. In addition to responding to requests for its services in individual countries, CAPEL also helped facilitate creation of

another regional organization, the Association of Electoral Organisms of Central America and the Caribbean, which allows electoral bodies to support one another through technical advice and observer missions. The Association also serves to reinforce efforts of its members as they seek to maintain themselves as independent electoral bodies, functioning free of interference or manipulation by governments or political parties.

Bilateral: Commodity assistance needed to establish mechanisms of fraud prevention (e.g., security paper for ballots, indelible ink, equipment for computerized registries) and support for international observer missions have been provided in El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras. In Haiti, A.I.D. and other donors are providing funds to be used for necessary commodities, observer missions and enabling CAPEL's assistance in voter education programs and training of polling officials. In FY 1987 missions in Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador have initiated bilateral projects that support long-term institutional and human development activities for the electoral tribunals.

STRENGTHENING LEGISLATIVE CAPACITY by helping national legislatures to develop and conduct training programs for members and staffs, and to establish permanent information and administrative support systems that will enhance the ability of legislators to analyze and debate issues and draft laws; and to facilitate dialogue among legislators in Central America and with their counterparts in the U.S., Canada and Europe.

Implementation:

Regional: A grant to Boston University's Center for Democracy facilitates increased contacts among legislative leaders from Belize, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras through visits to the U.S. Congress, two state legislatures, the Spanish Parliament, the Council of Europe and the European Parliament. Regional funds also initiated a process of transferring a successful experience in legislative training from the Dominican Republic to Central America. With a modest amount of technical advice from organizers of an orientation seminar for newly elected legislators held by a local university for the Dominican Congress in 1982, the legislatures of Honduras, Guatemala and El Salvador organized, designed and conducted their own seminars during 1985, inviting colleagues from other Latin American countries, the U.S. and Europe as participant observers. These separate activities have reinforced one another as well as contributed to the formulation of bilateral projects.

Bilateral: Interest in continuing legislative development generated by the orientation seminars led to bilateral projects in El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras. These projects seek to

provide training for legislators and staffs and establish or enhance staff support and information management systems with the objective of improving capacity for analysis of issues, drafting of laws, formulation of budgets and better understanding the responsibilities of legislators to other branches of government and to the citizenry. In 1986 the Dominican Congress and UCMM held a training seminar for the newly elected membership and is planning future sessions focused on particular aspects of legislative responsibility. A follow-up seminar has been tentatively scheduled for October 1987. The Chamber of Deputies has also carried out a public education campaign on the Dominican Constitution and on the functions and responsibilities of the Congress.

Costa Rica.....

CIVIC EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY ACTION: to promote understanding and practice of democratic processes, mainly at the community level, by helping citizens learn to work together effectively to solve common problems or achieve common goals.

Implementation:

Regional: NAPA-CA, OEF, NAPA/CODECAL.....

Bilateral: Honduras Public Awareness Component,

PROMOTING FREEDOM OF THE PRESS by building a training capacity in the region that will help increase the ability of mass media professionals to gather and disseminate the news according to the standards of an independent and responsible press.

Implementation:

Regional: FIU

STRENGTHENING LOCAL GOVERNMENT CAPACITY by helping municipal officials to improve their administrative abilities and to increase their access to resources that benefit their communities.

Implementation:

Regional: Interamerican Foundation of Cities conference

Bilateral: El Salvador

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT through training and exchange programs to develop leadership potential, especially of young people, and to enhance the skills of experienced leaders through training and networking with their counterparts in other countries.

Implementation:

Regional: EIL proposal for youth leadership training/PRODEMCA

Bilateral: Honduras leadership development component

CENTERS FOR THE STUDY OF DEMOCRACY: A.I.D. is prepared to support Latin American initiatives to establish centers that will provide opportunities for the study and dissemination of democratic concepts and processes through seminars and forums, study courses, research and publication of books and pamphlets aimed at the levels of both academic and popular education.

Implementation:

Costa Rica

STUDIES/ANALYSES/DIALOGUES: supporting research and information exchange projects initiated by Latin American and U.S. institutions on issues relating to democratic development in the region.

American University/PIETHO study project on Civil-Military Relations in Latin America and the Caribbean

American University study project on The Role of Political Parties in Democracy in Central America

Creative Associates: Retrospective of A.I.D.'s Experience in Strengthening Democratic Institutions in Latin America

Evaluation of A.I.D.'s Experience in Election Assistance in Central America

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