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**AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT  
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**IMPROVING STATE/AID COOPERATION IN DEMOCRACY PROGRAMS**

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## **Improving State/AID Cooperation in Democracy Programs**

### **INTRODUCTION:**

Democracy programs, far more than other AID initiatives, involve a cooperative USG approach at both headquarters and country mission level. As such they require optimal cooperation between State and AID in designing and implementing programs..

### **DISCUSSION:**

AID's work is an integral part of U.S. foreign policy and in many cases central to the implementation of national security policy. Traditionally, AID operates under the policy guidance and direction of the Secretary of State, regardless of legislative status of the AID institution, e.g. the IDCA era. Between the legislative injunction to follow foreign policy guidance from the Secretary and NSDM 38 making Ambassadors in the field the pre-eminent foreign policy representative of the President, AID must maintain effective mechanisms for coordination and ultimately approval of its programs. This is particular true in the field of democracy promotion.

Democracy programs contain particularly sensitive intrusions into a host countries' realms of sovereignty and diplomatic relationships with the United States. Frequently U.S. interests in a country span many issues, objectives and policy trade-offs. Issues related to human rights, political reform and the pace of democratization can not be addressed in linear fashion, and continual dialogue on means and ends and broader implications becomes essential. However, it would behoove both State and AID to examine different models of coordination and approval, and not automatically revert to conventional "command and control" management techniques. Democracy promotion must be creative, flexible and adjusted to circumstance. The most effective partners in this pursuit are often non-governmental organizations that wish to exercise some autonomy from the U.S.G. and employ methods less encumbered by regulation and "contractual" commitment to results in a volatile political environment. There are, however, inherent and well understood differences in State and AID's perspective and managerial horizon, i.e. short/long term policy dictates and political vs development context. The coordination mechanisms, therefore, must display some flexibility and delegation of authority.

#### Differences between the two agencies:

- Primary purpose (US foreign policy as prime aim for State, as

opposed to AID's purpose of development assistance sometimes directly and primarily, but sometimes indirectly and secondarily, to serve foreign policy ends).

- **Method of operation in design** (AID has to focus on strategic objectives and programs, institution building, local participation, and time horizons and sequences in manner different from State).
- **Responsibility for implementation** (AID takes prime responsibility and has expertise; and as implementor will have often have a different perception as to manner of operations).
- **Political expertise** (State has full time political officers whereas AID often has very part time democracy officers who may or may not have the training, and will usually not have the time to become or remain expert; State has far more experience and resources).
- **Access to certain categories of information essential to sound and fully informed analysis** (which may sometimes be too sensitive to share with AID officers).
- **Role of Ambassadors** (symbolic, political, representative of the US or/and of the President) as opposed to AID mission directors; and diverse pressures of events and of immediate publicity.
- **Political influence** (of which State appears to have a preponderance).
- **Views of operating relationships with autonomous and semi-autonomous US organizations.**
- **Level of analysis and operation** (with State more likely to be concerned with macro level policy analysis and impacts, and AID having to take more account of some 'meso' and micro considerations).
- **Legislative requirements on AID** (ex environment, trade, gender etc which may not affect State in the same way).
- **Operating development principles of AID, which change from time to time** (such as participation, sustainability, gender, environment, local institution development; and implications for other development programs such as health, family planning, agricultural and economic development).
- **The need for non- or multi-partisanship** (a general rule for AID assistance) as opposed to focused support, coalition building and aims of leveling the playing field (sometimes the objective of State).

In the simplest terms, from AID's perspective, the concern is with the kind of scenario in which State (or the Embassy), the more powerful organization, makes decisions based on immediate foreign policy and political needs without full consultation with AID (and therefore lacking AID input and perspective on all the sorts of questions mentioned above), and the consequent directing of AID to carry out work which may run counter to its analysis and view of the best interests of its overall and long term democracy and development operations.

On the other hand there have been a number of 'examples' of mechanisms which have been initiated at headquarters and in country, which effectively facilitated informed cooperation not only between the two, but also so as to include USIS and cooperating NGOs and firms, for purposes of specific events such as an election, or a contract such as AREAF, or on a semi-permanent basis.

These lessons of success need to be described, shared and learned through newsletters, workshops and in training; keeping in mind how much ultimately depends on personalities, interests and operating styles of the Ambassadors and relevant officers in AID and State/Embassies.

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

To ensure effective and mutually acceptable relationships between State and AID there needs to be improved training and communication and timely liaison; some of these initiatives could very usefully and appropriately be undertaken by G/DG.

1) Training, technical assistance, and supporting materials to assist AID officials become more effective democracy/political officers. Only to the extent that AID officers can provide effective political analysis (in addition to their programming and implementation expertise) will their views be respected and relied upon. It is not likely that AID can provide a whole new cadre of instant political officers; therefore methods of strengthening through more specialization, particularly in missions in which democracy is substantively (rather than formally) a strategic objective and training, user friendly guides, and newsletters and workshops to share ideas on key analytical components of assessments, and information about, and lessons of, successes and failures (and lessons of failure do very effectively point to the dangers of rushed efforts). With enhanced political expertise their input on technical design and implementation concerns (such as sustainability, institution building, and performance monitoring) will be taken more seriously.

2) In cooperation with State, there needs to more effective inclusion in State training programs of the implementation and

development implications of democracy. AID's perspective, on democracy, development, design, and implementation, and its version of lessons learned from both development and democracy programs need to be included State training programs. This might be included too in the training and preparation of Ambassadors.

3) AID at headquarters and mission level need to include State and Embassy officers in the process of strategic planning in order to inform and socialize State officers as to how planning, sequencing and linking to other components of the programs and to get their input, plus some level of commitment. Commitment will never be complete, but unless State goes along with the key outlines it is unlikely to pay heed to AID objectives, and the whole purpose of strategic planning will consequently be undermined.

4) In-country USG teams (including democracy committees) -- an inner circle restricted to the three USG agencies, or/and an outer circle including NGOs and firms; on a semi-permanent basis or for purposes of an event or a crisis; this has been effective in a number of cases - it requires these lessons of success to be shared.

5) Periodic workshops (at least twice a year) in which both Agencies are included such as the Africa conference on elections some years ago, the Tuesday group, at which lessons learned, recent trends, and projections can be discussed.

6) Requirement of permanent liaison mechanisms for democracy e.g. country desk officers of AID and State.

7) G/DG and State liaison. There needs to be one or more permanent committees (taking account of policy, operational, global, regional, functional needs). Since State has regional divisions G/DG will need to decide on whether it should assign regional responsibilities to some of its officers in order to work with State. It may have to do this in any case to respond to a more general need for regional expertise, as also to serve as access points for country missions. Liaison with State would then become a further responsibility for this officer. State may also need to cooperate on a functional basis, for example on elections and rule of law, and therefore may need to work with functional specialists from G/DG.

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