

# I M D

Institutional Development Handbook

A F R A M E W O R K

F O R

D E M O C R A T I C

P A R T Y - B U I L D I N G

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# Preface

All democracies need strong and well-established parties to channel the demands of their citizens, govern in the public good and satisfy the basic needs of their societies. However, political parties currently don't fare well in public opinion surveys and dissatisfaction with their performance seems to be growing. This 'Handbook' seeks to contribute to the strengthening and development of all political parties in nations that want to improve the quality of their democracy. To regain the trust of the people, a political party must be able to seriously and systematically tackle the issues highlighted here.

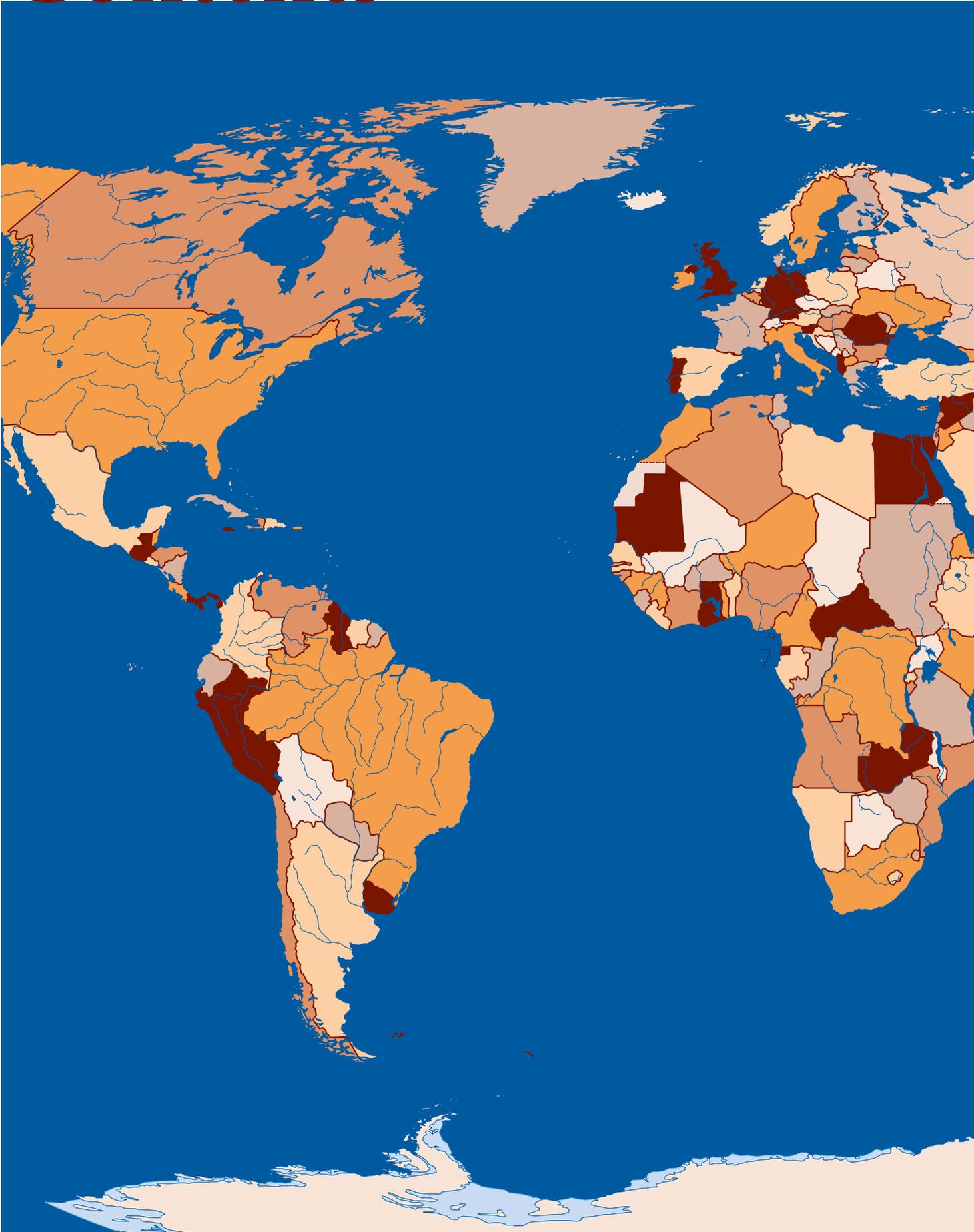
The Handbook constitutes a summing-up of a first reflection undertaken in 2003 among the IMD and partners from Africa, Latin America and Central Europe. The international workshop that was organized to look at the main criteria for improving the performance of political parties has thus led to tentative guidelines to put these criteria into practice. Of course, the selection of issues and indicators has been guided by the intention to make the Handbook generally applicable, but the idea is to present to the public and party workers the first inner ring of a tree so that further reflection and experience will allow all to add more rings in subsequent years. In other words, this is unfinished work in progress, not a ready-made package or recipe book. All indicators and instruments identified here must be considered in light of the experience and context of each political party. Historically and regionally-specific content may be added on by the parties themselves.

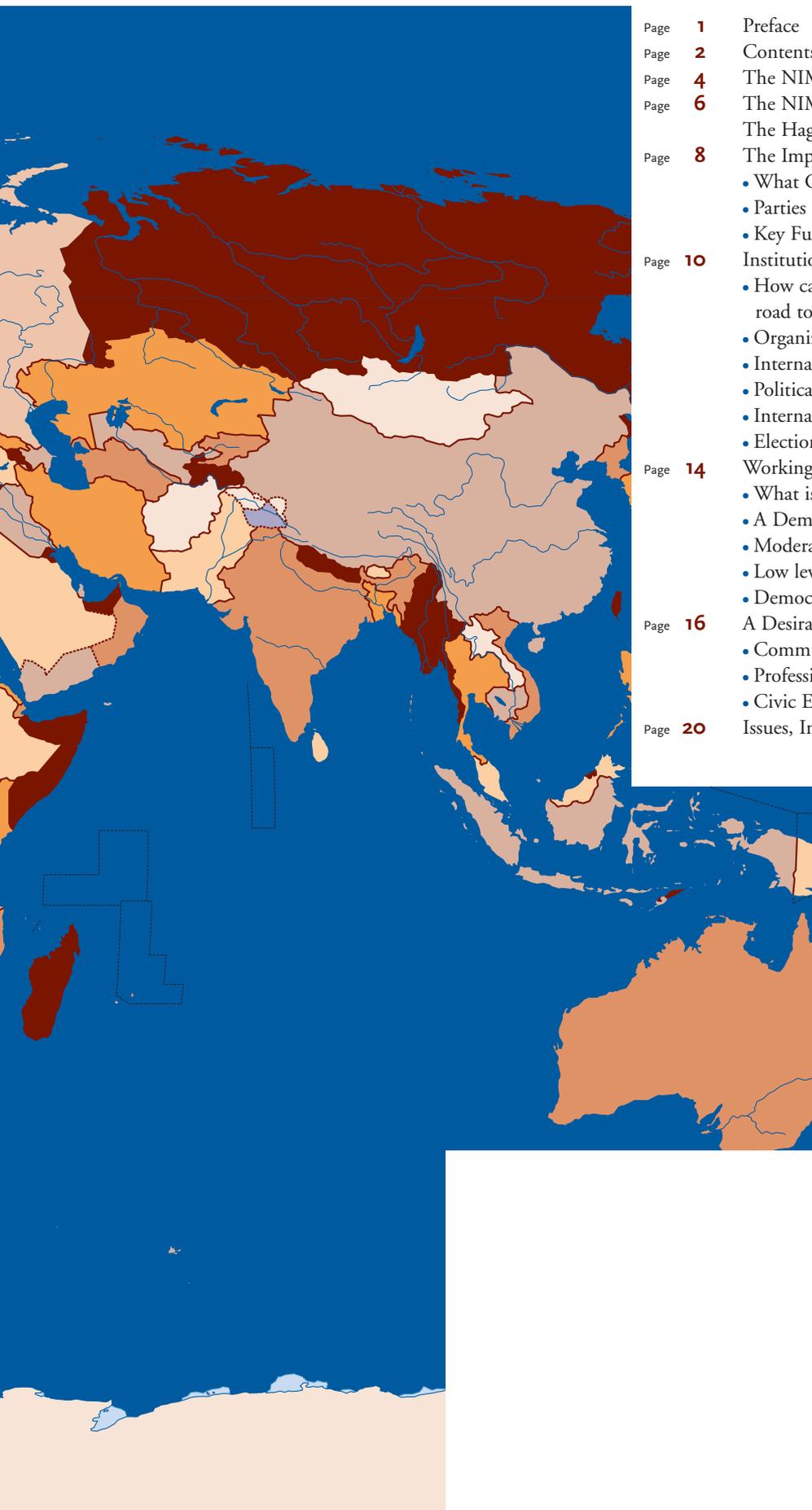
Democratic governance can be enriched, made more accountable and legitimate by approaching the substance of politics and the conduct of political parties to the conditions suggested in the Handbook. Clearly, ensuring better democratic governance is not simply a technical issue that can be dealt with by marking off yes or no answers to each criterion box. Good governance and good party politics depend on the awareness that political development and reform hinge on simultaneous and timely doing and reflecting, not just on fixing problems.

It must be kept in mind that practicing democracy encompasses elections and the time *between* elections. Although our Handbook is not a blueprint for institutional development, we offer suggestions as to what to look for and what to do to make your party more meaningful and durable, throughout the process of nation-building and beyond. According to the specific historical context within which a given party operates, its recommendations could be applied in a balanced and selective way, taking into account priorities and obstacles.

Overall, this Handbook reflects trends in the democratic development of Latin America, Africa and Central Europe. We share the view that politics matters, that political parties are part of the problem of dissatisfaction with the functioning of democracy, and yet believe that they constitute part of the solution to make the political system more responsive to the needs of the people.

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# The NIMD and its Mission

Political parties are the heart and soul of a democracy. Democracy is recognised as the most successful political system in which political and socio-economic human rights are respected and conflicts are resolved in a peaceful manner. As Nobel Prize laureate Armartya Sen commented: 'Countries should not become fit for democracy, but become fit through democracy.' Political reforms, aimed at strengthening democracy and sustainable poverty reduction go hand in hand.

Democracy is a pre-condition for sustainable development and poverty reduction. It is increasingly recognized that *politics matter*. Economic development and good governance are not purely technical issues. Political institutions and the way they function are important factors for sound management of the economy. Political parties are among the most important players within a democratic system and therefore have influence on the ups and downs of sustainable development.

These views are expressed in the United Nations' *Millennium Declaration*, which sets out the international development goals (IDG's) to be achieved by 2015. The member states pledge in this document that they will 'spare no effort to promote democracy and strengthen the rule of law,' and the commitment has been made 'to strengthen the capacity of all countries to implement the principles and practices of democracy and respect of human rights.'

In UNDP's Human Development Report 2002, entitled *Deepening Democracy in a Fragmented World*, this issue is further elaborated. The report includes the statement that 'Politics matter for human development because people everywhere want to be free to determine their destinies, express their views and participate in the decisions that shape their lives. These capabilities are just as important for human development - for expanding people's choices - as being able to read or enjoy good health'.

Poverty reduction is, thus, not simply a matter of improving people's incomes, but also of giving them the right and the opportunity to participate in decisions which can influence their lives and the structure of their society. For this reason, a democratic political system has been proven to be indispensable for sustainable poverty reduction. These views form the conceptual context on which the IMD programme is founded.

Support for democratic processes in the past ten years has mainly focussed on the organisation of free and fair elections, good governance and the strengthening

of the civil society. Direct support for political parties has largely remained outside of the picture.

The initial optimism after the end of the Cold War that the transition from autocratic to democratic forms of government would be an automatic process has been proved wrong by the facts. Out of approximately 100 countries which had embarked on this transition, only twenty have since become democratic. The rest have remained in a grey area, where it is by no means certain that the process will develop in the right direction. Lack of viable political parties is increasingly accepted as the missing link.

The Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (IMD) was established in 2001 by the Dutch political parties represented in the House of Representatives, with the mandate to support the development and/or consolidation of political parties in young democracies. The IMD is therefore truly an initiative *by political parties for political parties*.

This combining of forces of both government and opposition parties allows IMD to play a particular role in the politically sensitive and difficult area of support for political parties in young, developing democracies. By using this formula the IMD has created a lead position in this field.

IMD can build on a solid base of expertise. The board and staff, who come from the different political parties, guarantee a broad ranging contribution and an extensive skills network. In addition, the programmes in South Africa and Mozambique, which have a history predating the establishment of IMD (the NZA, the Foundation for the New South Africa, IMD's direct predecessor), constitute a positive experience that can be used in the development of programmes in other countries. It was Nelson Mandela who, during a visit to The Netherlands, made reference to the good co-operation between Dutch and South African political parties as a model to be used to benefit other young democracies.

After a period of thorough preparation, IMD has gradually taken shape and is now fully operational. Following preparatory studies, identification missions and consultation with a wide range of stakeholders, thirteen countries have been selected with which IMD has initiated co-operation agreements. Two country programmes have meanwhile been externally evaluated (Mozambique and Guatemala) and the lessons learned are used in the partnership relations with all the programme countries.

The Hague, May 2004.

# The NIMD Executive Director's Address to The Hague Workshop

on the criteria for the institutional development of political parties

Reading recent public opinion surveys in Latin America and Africa, one notices the relatively high levels of support among the public for democracy over authoritarian systems of government. In comparison, the levels of satisfaction with the functioning of democracy are generally very low and declining. There is little trust in how the political system functions and in the political elites. Within the architecture of institutions that make up a democracy across the world, in young and in established democracies, surveys consistently show that political parties belong to the least trusted institutions.

If democracy is to function better, political parties need to improve their performance and regain higher levels of trust by the people. Hence the focus on political parties. The Institute for Multiparty Democracy (IMD) was established with a mandate to facilitate the institutional development of political parties in young democracies. But how do we define 'improvement of performance'? This Workshop brings together political party leaders and academic practitioners from Africa and Latin America to address this and related questions. If political parties are to develop into meaningful and durable institutions, what are the key issues to be tackled and how should the implementation be monitored?

Internationally, an increasing awareness can be observed for the need to complement processes of economic reform with simultaneous political reform. These political reforms need to aim at creating the conditions for social justice and sustainable social and economic development in a context of nation building. Politics matter; this has become the new mantra in international cooperation. It was first introduced under the banner of governance but it is understood that it is not a technical issue alone that needs to be fixed. What is required is democratic governance, otherwise known as democracy. Countries do not become fit for democracy but through democracy, as Prof Amartya Sen, the Indian Nobel laureate, teaches us.

With the rediscovery that politics matter, the accountability of leaders toward their citizens, and the important role political parties should play in this regard, is receiving more and more attention on national and international agendas. As practitioners we share the view that political parties ought to play key roles in the 'dynamization' of the democratic reform processes. Whereas political parties are part of the problem that needs to be addressed, they form at the same time part of the solution for providing a more stable and predictable democratic political system that is responsive to the needs of the people.

Part of the dissatisfaction with the functioning of democracy can perhaps be explained by what some of the participants here have termed: 'the unclear destiny of democracy'. There is no clear blueprint of what democracy is. It needs to be developed, based on universal principles, according to the specific historical, geographic and demographic circumstance of each society. Democracy has to be constructed; it cannot be imposed. The construction takes place through processes of inclusive dialogue in which the institutional political framework takes shape and trust in the system is developed. The construction is a continuous process, in response to the evolution of societies, technologies and peoples.

In practising democracy, perhaps too much emphasis has been put on the competitive function of democracy as highlighted in elections. In developing trust in the democratic system of governance, other functions of democracy should not be neglected, such as accommodative and reconciliatory functions. Hence the process through which democracy is constructed, with a focus on participation, inclusiveness, tolerance and consensus building, needs greater emphasis over the often dominating focus on competition and rivalry. For a stable democracy, the different functions need to be carefully balanced.

Political parties are not only competitors but also stakeholders in the political system that citizens expect to function for the common good. The composition of IMD itself is an expression of this joint responsibility of political parties for the performance of the democratic political system that enables political parties to develop. In our method of work, in the relationship with our partners in Latin America and Africa, we engage in dialogue and encourage inter-party dialogue among our partners. These dialogues aim at a better understanding of the challenges that political parties face for improving the party system within which they function. They also promote specific opportunities that exist for the longer-term institutional development of political parties, increasingly based on internal strategic planning exercises. With a better understanding and greater consensus about the priorities, it is also possible for international partners, such as IMD, to attach available resources to programmes that address these priorities.

The international Workshop was organized to provide time and space for a preliminary reflection among partners on what the important criteria are for improving the performance of political parties and how these criteria can be operationalized and put to use. The ideas generated in this Workshop will need to be elaborated in follow-up consultations that should prepare the conditions for their successful application.

# The Importance of Political Parties in Democracy

## **What Constitutes Institutional Party Development?**

For our purposes, we can define institutional development as the process whereby parties become better organized, practice democratic values and establish rules and procedures that will allow them to compete more effectively and be more successful in elections and at implementing their policy preferences. If successful, institutional development may result in winning office and performing well while governing. Alternatively, they could perform well as a meaningful opposition (just as important as being in government). Institutionalized parties are thus better able to respond to and account for the demands and interests of party members and the larger electorate.

In order to institutionalize themselves, political parties therefore need to evolve in a process that closely follows the public sentiment and parallels social development. It requires a flexible mix of guiding ideas, underlying interests, democratic practices and rational decision-making.

## **Parties may be Flawed but are Needed**

Nowadays, political parties seem to be immersed in a crisis. Some of them have short-lived experiences. They frequently lack the ability to play their traditional roles of mobilizing and representing citizens and linking them to governance. What is worse, they often don't give citizens a sense of meaningful political identity and participation. Even in the case of some older parties, links with the general public are often scarce, something which coincides with the emergence of civil society organizations and social movements that attempt to substitute the role of parties. Non-party activism, however, does not necessarily improve the performance of democracy. It tends to reflect single issues and not the wide diversity of policies most

parties are concerned with. So, political parties may be flawed but are still needed.

#### Why are political parties and party systems necessary for a functioning democracy?

There are at least three general reasons:

- Parties are the main vehicle for political representation;
- Parties are the main mechanism for the organization of government;
- Parties are key channels for maintaining democratic accountability.

The democratic evolution and improvement of political parties is thus central to the well-being of the polity and the quality of governance. If parties don't work well, democracy will suffer. Institutional party development can go hand in hand with social development, but it depends on the concerted effort of party activists and common citizens.

#### Key Functions of Political Parties

Parties fulfill a number of more specific functions to perform these general roles, to integrate and accommodate interests and to reconcile differences when disagreements arise. Beyond that, modern representative, democratic government continues to be, first and foremost, party government. The political party is still the key institution in democratic elections. It *mobilizes electoral support* for the candidates it puts up, with a view to capturing governmental office. Party candidates, leaders, militants and activists mobilize and educate voters. Parties *aggregate interests* to offer more easily grasped alternative policies and choices to voters.

In democracy, the aim of institutional political development is a party system whose values and actions express, reproduce and promote democratic practices. The *transfer of democratic political and cultural values* from one generation to the next is vital for the stability and orderly evolution of a country. Political parties play an important role in this transfer. Acceptance of pluralism, tolerance, participation, respect for minorities, majority rule and freedom of expression are some of the key democratic values and practices parties should encourage and strive for.

In addition, institutional political development allows the democratic system to work more effectively. In fragmented multiparty systems, to form a government often means *setting up a coalition*. This brings the political party into unchallenged prominence. Party leaders, both in and out of the

legislature, are the movers and shakers of coalition formation negotiations. They choose prospective coalition partners, hammer out policy compromises and share out available governmental positions. Once a government has been formed the role of parties in parliament is just as crucial. The parties organize parliamentarians for the effective performance of their functions: legislative, representative, financial, and support of (or opposition to) the political executive.

A party in parliament may also have the important function of influencing the executive in light of its own ideas and policy-positions. However, *scrutinizing the executive* is a role every parliamentarian should play. The government of a free and democratic people has to be open, accountable and responsive, in the first instance, and on a continuous basis, to the representatives of the people. The role of the political party in the organization of parliament is critical for the deepening and consolidation of democracy, not least through parliament's exercise of its oversight function.

Political parties also play an important role in the *formulating public policy*, both as a means of convincing the electorate during election campaigns and for ruling, if they happen to form the government. Political parties may be facing effective challenges by other institutions in the areas of interest articulation, aggregation and representation. But they face no such immediate challenge to their governing, institutional or procedural functions in several important areas of democratic governance. While political parties should organize parliamentarians for the performance of these roles, it is also necessary to acknowledge that parliamentarians will not be able to play their critical roles effectively and with transparency, if the grip of the governing party in parliament is overly strong. Free, multiparty, competitive elections may act as the ultimate guarantee of accountability for public office holders but it does not suffice. Additional means of *securing continuous accountability* between elections becomes necessary. This is where a reorientation of most political parties, particularly in emerging democracies, becomes crucially relevant. Political parties are not only efficient vote maximizers and office seekers. They may become key policy seekers and great accountability enforcers as well. In brief, all democracies need their citizens to follow closely and get involved in the continued improvement of the performance and behaviour of political parties. This can be accomplished by increasing our knowledge of their functioning, the awareness about their roles and through our own conscious participation.

# Institutional Party Development

## How can we tell whether or not a party is on the road to institutionalization?

To be institutionalized means to have strength and durability, to be able to withstand crises and present credible governing alternatives to people. Are there criteria and indicators that can be applied to measure the degree of democratic institutionalization? Can we have an idea whether or not our own party is advancing toward a greater degree of institutionalization?

There are at least five areas relating to the internal organization of political parties that can provide such criteria: organizational strength, internal democracy, political identity, internal party unity and electioneering capacity. For the sake of clarity we must distinguish among the elements, but all are related in practice and may even overlap to some extent. Each area considered enhances a given party's responsiveness to demands and interests and makes this response more effective. If all areas are developed, this significantly increases the political chances when election time comes.

This notwithstanding, party activists must be aware of too much party structuring, since this may hamper reasonable change and renewal and might even provoke a rupture between a given party and the evolution of civil society.

### Organizational Strength

Political parties are interested in achieving electoral and political gains. These can only be accomplished to satisfaction through the effective deployment of the parties' organizational resources, at the local, intermediate and national levels. In this sense, we are interested in ascertaining and being able to use the material capacity as well as the human and financial resources that a party has, including the skills and the personnel with which these are managed. A party that has been able to clearly identify its resources may be able to expand them and deploy them effectively.

The existence of a well-thought out long-term strategic plan and a party programme that pulls together all organizational dimensions is an excellent indicator of party strength. Furthermore, the application of an annual audit is a further indicator of institutional strength since it can reliably tell members about the extent of organizational progress and the degree of congruence (or incongruence) between stated policy and actual practice.

Aside from the existence, good functioning and improvement of a party apparatus, the institutional strength of a political party may be gauged by the

socio-economic groups that it is able to penetrate and represent: the more numerous the socio-economic groups that are penetrated by the party and the greater the extent of party representation of these groups, the greater its degree of institutionalization and organizational capacity.

#### Do's

Durable strength is a combination of foresight, endurance, resources and stability. Hence, the more recent the founding of the party, the weaker it is likely to be. This should not be an obstacle, however, as there are other elements that will help us establish how to move toward greater institutionalization and strength. For example, political parties can encourage the following:

- Annual planning for party activities;
- Decentralization of resources;
- Transparency in the handling of resources;
- Accountability;
- Relations and selection procedures based on merit and solidarity.

#### Don'ts

- Engage in corruption.
- Waste resources.
- Encourage substantial fluctuations in legislative representation or in votes won.

### Internal Democracy

Democratic values and practices are crucial for democratic institutionalization and the development of party strength. It makes no sense to stand for a democratic polity and yet not practice democracy within one's party. Voters readily perceive the contradiction and a party that does not practice what it preaches is unlikely to be favoured at election time.

Internal party democracy means that a political party has impersonal *rules and procedures* to avoid the arbitrary control of internal elections and party functioning by individual leaders or cliques. Such rules must also be put into practice, otherwise a party is neither institutionalized nor truly democratic. Internal party democracy means that all party components and functionaries follow *due process* and are accountable to the rank-and-file and to the lawful organs established in the statutes.

How 'membership' is defined here is crucial for checks and balances to exist. In a democratic political party it is the members who should exercise control.

There are other, more specific indicators that help us pinpoint the degree of internal party democracy. The more of these that exist or are applied, the greater the

institutionalization and strength of a democratic party:

#### Do's

- *Transparency*, for example, through the open access to information and publication of all records;
- Explicit statement, in the party's constitution, of essential *democratic values* such as pluralism, tolerance, inclusiveness, gender equality and *accountability*;
- Internal practice of the above stated values, demonstrating a commitment to internal democracy by party officials to ensure a high level of *congruence* between values and practices;
- Existence of *internal mechanisms for the democratic resolution of conflicts* and potential conflicts (such as, for example, may emerge regarding the performance of duties and responsibilities during a campaign). Here it becomes significant that the appropriate application of party statutes and by-laws have been democratically adopted;
- Frequent and scrupulous organization of *internal elections* and open selection procedures for party officials and candidates for elective public office;
- Basing advancement through leadership ranks and appointments on *rational rules* and merit as opposed to favoritism and patronage.
- A fair number of *party congresses* and significant levels of participation;
- An ability of the rank-and-file to set and influence the party programme;
- A significant degree of *decentralization* of party organs;
- *Little overlap or accumulation* of political positions by the party leadership;
- The *rotation and time limitation* of leadership positions in the party.

The common saying, 'He who pays the piper calls the tunes', is as pertinent to the affairs of the political party as it is to the affairs of the rest of society. The persons or organs that control the *allocation of funds* are in a powerful position to set priorities for the attainment of party goals. The greater the institutional role of the national party organs in allocating funds and the greater the number of regions and individuals who participate in this process at the national level, the greater the democratization of internal political power. This responsibility should not be in the hands of just one or a few individuals in the party, as is often the case.

The *control of communication* or the information flow is a key factor in controlling an organization. From the standpoint of party democracy or centralization of power, the concern with controlling

communications refers to who controls the content and distribution of party newspapers or other forms of relevant media.

How a party disciplines its members, particularly those who occupy governmental positions and candidates for parliament, so that they conform to rules and norms, is one of the reliable indicators of internal democracy. *Discipline* can range all the way from expulsion from the party, the most severe, through suspension or removal from party office, to denial of specified rights of membership. The questions are: How much is due process followed? At what levels are disciplinary decisions taken and by whom? The more controlled such decisions are by the party executive committee, the less democratic the party.

The degree of centralization of power within a political party, or the extent of a party's internal democracy, is one of the most important things for practitioners to focus on in order to develop organizational strength in a democratic way.

#### Political Identity

A political party that seeks office must know itself and what it stands for in order to woo the electorate. Fuzzy ideas, contradictory principles and undefined programmes are unlikely to make a party clearly identifiable and desirable to potential voters.

In order to gain strength and become a credible choice, a party must adhere to a set of more or less coherent social, economic and political principles which ought to be spelled out in a *party programme*. That is, any serious party has to have some ideological identity, even for strictly organizational, electoral and governmental purposes.

A significant majority of party workers and activists must rely on incentives other than financial to move forward in their work --namely, idealism, doctrine and ideology. An identity based on policy issues, programme and non-material incentives can become more important for recruitment and everyday work than the materialistic opportunities and rewards that some parties have traditionally been able to dispense through patronage.

A good sense of identity fosters greater involvement in party activities. The higher the proportion of members who participate at higher levels of frequency and activity, the more developed, and certainly the more effective, the party is likely to be. Greater participation on the basis of shared ideas tends to generate spontaneous forms of collective work.

If it is to succeed, a political party has to have a significant number of activists and militants in addition to just members. How to get those who are primarily motivated by incentives other than patronage and jobs is probably one of the biggest challenges that party leaders face in young democracies.

#### Do's

- Establish some policy-research capacity;
- Elicit debate among party members about ideology and policy choices;
- Establish links with scholarly and social institutions while developing a more self-reliant capacity.

### Internal Unity

One can say that a political party suffers from lack of internal unity or factionalism when it experiences disruptive divisions that may threaten its functioning or performance. While a diversity of opinions is to be cherished and defended within a party, factionalism and ideological fragmentation should be avoided.

The fact that party members agree or disagree over an issue is undoubtedly important, especially for the party's performance. But even more important for the party's survival and development is how disagreement is expressed and resolved in intra-party politics.

Whether disagreement takes place within the boundaries of party policy and ideology or leads into deep divisions and fragmentation is a critical issue of ideological identity within the party.

Whether or not a party has a strong sense of identity, factionalism must be avoided, for it can manifest itself destructively in all spheres of party activity: in the legislature (shown in the way members vote, for instance); regarding key issues, ideology and leadership and around matters of party strategy and tactics.

There is a tendency for disagreements to break out from time to time in any large organization. The inevitability of some semblance of factionalism erupting from time to time puts a further premium on conflict resolution processes within the party. The worst consequences of factionalism, splits and loss of public confidence, can be minimized by having mutually agreed rules and continued due process so that democratic pluralism will not lead to deep divisions. In general, this can be accomplished by ensuring internal democracy and by keeping to the party principles, programme and statutes.

#### Do's

- Encourage intra-party dialogue.
- Get familiar with party principles and policies.
- Have mechanisms that ensure due process when disputes arise.

### Electioneering Capacity

Votes for a party don't come automatically. They must be sought after by a range of measures and gained by ensuring certain crucial conditions.

Winning enough seats in national elections so as to form the government or to participate in the formation of a coalition government is the highest ambition of every serious, self-respecting political party in a democracy. How a party selects its parliamentary candidates, whether it practices internal democracy and allows local constituency units to select candidates by democratic methods, may well be the key to its electoral success. The electioneering capacity of a party is probably the best shorthand way of expressing and putting together all the organizational resources (human and material, financial, ideological, image-related) available to a party so that it can present itself in the most convincing and effective manner against all its rivals in the particular national context.

#### Do's

In order to maximize a party's electioneering capacity it should organize its human and material resources rationally and deploy them according to a previously developed strategy. For this purpose, a party must have a clear idea of its own programme, constituency needs and the political environment. No party can disregard these aspects if it seriously seeks office. More extensive and intensive improvement of a party's electioneering capacity might enhance a political culture of fair competition and the constant improvement in the performance of government.

#### *Minimize or eliminate the following practices*

- Treating voters, providing entertainment and recreational services, providing food, clothing and other articles used as campaign advertising materials, and outright monetary payments to individuals or expensive handouts to communities must be minimized or eliminated. Instead, such traditional practices could be replaced, even gradually, by the provision of more respectable welfare and other useful services.
- A strategy of restricting competition, such as interfering with opposition advertising; harassing opposition party workers and opposition voters; buying votes; falsifying vote reports; co-opting political opponents, should be avoided in all circumstances. It would be a mark of a truly democratic party to want to pursue with others ways to reduce and eliminate such strategies and tactics through the adoption of appropriate codes of ethical conduct and the development of a more democratic political culture.

# Working Towards a Constructive Party-Party System Nexus

## What is a Party System?

Parties in a democracy exist and operate within a particular party system. That is, each party forms part of a larger whole, where it interacts with at least another political party, and often with more, according to existing laws and electoral rules. The party system encapsulates the structure of competition for government and it influences the nature of interaction among parties. The linkages between a given party and the party system are thus important for democratic governability. Institutionalized party systems tend to promote greater political stability and governmental effectiveness.

Finding a good balance between strength and flexibility in a party system is a great challenge. Generally speaking, parties work better for a country when they are broad-based, limited in number and institutionalized. Making politics in a national broad-based party system discourages the growth of regional, local and separatist parties.

## Moderate Levels of Fragmentation and Polarization

Party systems should not be too highly fragmented. This could encourage conflict and even the breakdown of democracy. *The extent of fragmentation* of the party system, that is, the number of relevant political parties in the system, is probably the most important influence on the structure of inter-party competition, interaction and stability of the government.

The extent of fragmentation, however, is itself influenced by *the electoral system*, or the legal framework for elections. Low levels of fragmentation tend to increase governance and make things easier for the executive, but in certain multicultural and regionalized societies may diminish the level of democratic representation; high levels of fragmentation make coalitions necessary, and increase the levels of representation, but may also weaken governance since the executive becomes vulnerable to ‘blackmail’ on the part of its coalition partners. Therefore, no specific figure can possibly be given to draw the line between functional and dysfunctional levels of fragmentation. This remains a context-specific issue to be ascertained by the actors themselves.

*The extent of polarization*, or the ideological, political and social distance that separates one party from other parties in the system, is yet another important factor. Parties must become aware of the possible implications of a polarized environment and prepare themselves to deal with its consequences: lower levels of political stability, conflict, the likelihood of short-lived governments and rapid change-overs in voter allegiance. High degrees of polarization and fragmentation are dysfunctional for they neither express nor encourage a consensual approach to politics. Restricting the number of parties is one way of dealing with potentially harmful fragmentation, yet each party must assess the advantages and disadvantages of the party-system where it operates and choose accordingly.

#### Do's

- Become aware of the possible consequences of too much fragmentation and polarization.
- Encourage a culture of consensus and have mechanisms for consensus-building.
- Look at the electoral system to limit the extent of fragmentation.

### Low Levels of Volatility

The extent of fragmentation and the extent of polarization affect the degree of *volatility*, which is the stability or regularity of inter-party competition. This refers to the degree of change in the number of parties that interact, the net change of votes and seats that parties obtain from one election to the other, and the durability of governments. High volatility in the party system can undermine the opportunity for the development of voter and party worker loyalty. Short-term governments can also undermine party accountability for policy and performance.

#### Do's

- Promote the growth of loyalty among voters and party workers.
- Maintain stable patterns of inter-party competition.

High levels of fragmentation, polarization and volatility should be avoided. There are three other conditions which can contribute to minimize these problems: the legal framework for the party system; the behaviour of the parties; and the contextual environment of the party system.

### A Democratic Legal Framework

The Constitution of a country and a number of relevant laws and by-laws, such as those regulating political parties and elections, provide the legal framework for the operation of political parties. Relevant constitutional provisions would normally provide a definition of a political party and prescribe a multi-party system and protect the usual list of civil and political rights without which elections cannot be free and democracy cannot be true. Party leaders and activists ought to know and seek to improve these laws and regulations.

Although the behaviour of parties in the party system is of far greater consequence for the performance of the party system than the legal framework, we have to acknowledge that such behaviour is influenced, constrained or encouraged as the case may be, by the law and by the structures that the law creates or heavily influences. Both directly, through strategic alliances and strategic voting that the electoral system may encourage, and indirectly, through the number of parties that it helps to spawn, the electoral system demonstrates its significance. In general, the legal

framework has to be treated by the party worker as a given, something that is inflexible and not easily changed, but must be known and acknowledged for any party to operate.

#### Do's

- Know and seek to improve party-related laws and regulations.
- Have party people who have specialized legal and constitutional knowledge.

### Democratic Practices

Democratic practices contribute to political legitimacy and trust. Parties vary in the nature and extent of their participation in the party system or national politics. To exercise governmental leadership; have cabinet participation, possess legislative and electoral strength, and engage in political activities across the nation, do not suffice to make parties fully democratic.

How a governing party plays politics can, and often does, influence the attitudes and behaviour of other parties towards the system. For instance, if the governing party exploits the advantages of incumbency to use state resources to the disadvantage of the opposition parties, it should not be surprising if the latter develop less than respectful, patriotic attitudes to the laws of the land and return the favour when they come to power.

#### Do's

- Have a democratic *party orientation*: it can influence the behaviour, strategies and tactics that other parties in the system might adopt. Parties confronting constructive strategies and tactics around them will be discouraged from unbecoming practices themselves. Three basic *party strategies* have been identified: accepting open competition; restricting competition from other parties; and subverting the political system. In full-fledged democracy, only the first strategy is completely legal and ethical. It is clear that, depending on the particular mix of strategies and tactics used by the various parties, party systems will either reinforce or weaken multiparty democracy.
- Increase the *level of trust* in a political system: It can have an important impact on the level of legitimacy. Governing parties have to do more to nurture trust within the system.
- Trust is to be fostered by ensuring a more effective and *efficient performance* of the party system, and particularly, of the governing party or coalition. This refers mainly to a party's capacity to take to fruition the demands made by the electorate, fulfilling its electoral promises. In the case of non-governing parties, a good performance basically means practicing its statutory mandate, representing its constituency well and overseeing the behaviour of government.

# A Desirable Party-Civil Society Relationship

Multi-party democracy and the good functioning of the party system are not merely ends in themselves but means to live in harmony and improve the quality of life of all citizens. How does the relationship between a political party and the wider society signal the institutional or organizational development of a democratic political party?

Traditionally, political parties articulate and aggregate interests, in pursuit of their electoral and policy-making functions. They represent citizens who have interests. It is inconceivable that a political party will not attempt to influence, and in the process almost likely be influenced by, some civil society organizations such as business associations and unions. The question, therefore, is: what types of such relations help, rather than hinder, the institutional and democratic development of political parties? Also, what helps political parties perform better as channels of citizens' demands and links between political and civil society?

### **Communication Channels Between Political Parties and Civil Society Organizations**

Sometimes, political parties can be paired with social cleavages such as class, religion, ethnicity or geographical region. Perhaps more frequently, parties tend to be 'catch-all'. This means that such parties must strive to maximize the votes and hence don't pay as much attention to ideological or identity issues. In all cases, parties must have or establish links with society. Information on the social basis of political parties, their policies and activities, or about the relationship between social cleavages and politics, is central to the determination of the prospects of political stability, the capacity to make democratic compromises, the likelihood of political conflict.

The level of party support from civil society can in part be established by asking and answering the following question: 'How well does the party attract different types of supporters?' Or, conversely, 'How much of the total party support is concentrated in a single type of supporter?' Also, 'How well does the distribution of supporters within the party reflect the distribution of social groups within the country?' Parties should strive for inclusion and greater representation. This can make them more competitive and attractive to the voters.

Other dimensions of social cleavage may be selected for assessing the bases of party support. These are socio-economic status (usually occupation), religion, ethnicity (including language and race), region, urban-rural residence and education. The social composition of political parties is important

information to have if one wants to understand how parties relate to civil society. Good record-keeping on party membership and targeted membership drives by party workers are a required basis for such information. Otherwise, carefully conducted social science surveys may be used.

In the absence of durable party-social structure relationships forged in the past, and given that civil society organizations have proliferated, political parties have to work harder at establishing and maintaining constructive, mutually enriching linkages with such organizations, especially if they represent important social and economic interests.

#### **Do's**

In order to strengthen linkages between political parties and civil society organizations, the following are some of the areas practitioners need to work on:

- *Building confidence* and trust between political parties and civil society organizations;
- Supporting political parties so that *enabling legislation* for society's activities is passed;
- Engaging in *regular dialogue*, consultations and information exchange between political parties and civil society organizations;
- Strengthening of *organic linkages* existing between political parties and civil society organizations;
- Minding the extent to which there is overlap in membership between political parties and civil society organizations;
- Paying attention to the extent to which civil society groups leadership for political parties;
- The extent to which candidates for public office are sponsored by civil society organizations rather than by political parties.

*Collaborative exchanges* are the way to go among parties, CSO's and common citizens. Democracy means people's sovereignty, but sovereignty cannot be effectively exercised without channels to encourage the exchange of ideas and convey people's choices. After all, democracy is a collective enterprise for building a better future for all citizens. Without a reasonable degree of dialogue and interaction between parties and civil society the values of pluralism and mutual respect cannot thrive. Joint activities of discussion, debate, celebration and commemoration thus ought to be encouraged between parties and CSO's.

### **Professional and Autonomous Mass Media**

The media have become a very powerful force in shaping the agenda, and quality, of democratic politics. Policy issues are one area where the role of the media and their relationship with the political parties should be of ongoing interest, in contrast to

the intense but time-compressed interest in the relationship just during election campaigns. If the media take issues and public policy seriously and objectively, as they should, they will probably not end up being labeled and identified with some narrow or partisan interest.

Since communication and interaction is a building-block of democracy, it is in the interest of all parties to allow for the well-functioning of a free press. Professional mass media will affect the way people interact and how democracy in practice works.

#### **Do's**

It is suggested that the relationship between political parties and the media can be made more democratic and mutually enriching by the following:

- Enhancing the degree of trust between political parties and the media;
- Maintaining the autonomy of the media from the state and from specific group or business interests;
- Increasing the level of professional, non-partisan, media reporting.

### **The application of ICTs and the institutionalization of political parties**

Technology changes the way people interact and, therefore, technology changes the way democracies work. Political parties can use network media, and in particular the Internet, to strengthen their organizational capacity, to enhance their accountability and transparency to the electorate, and to actively engage in dialogues with their rank and file.

Internet access may be limited in developing countries. But the number of people that do have access to the Internet is expanding. Internet connectivity will further increase rapidly in the years to come.

The strategic use of Internet does not need to be a costly enterprise. For as little as thirty US dollars a year, one can buy a domain name and rent hosting facilities. By using free web publishing software and interactive tools, a party website can be set up in hours, days at most. Politicians can express their personal views and anxieties and the public can react to that. The use of 'web language' - short, sincere, sometimes provocative bits of text - further adds to the transparency to voters.

#### **Do's**

The Internet can be deployed to maintain active relationships with regional party offices, party representatives and the electorate. In its most basic form, such information flows purely exist of email

exchange. The next step is to start internal mailing lists that can be used to transport messages effectively to a fixed set of recipients within the party. Finally, sophisticated web technology could facilitate the internal dialogue using forums, chat rooms, news sections and document publishing systems.

- Launch a party website and publish news, opinion articles and manifesto's online;
- Start collecting email addresses and start mailing an electronic newsletter;
- Monitor civil society and proactively react to emerging news on your website;
- Make sure that the party cadre and party organization have access to Internet;
- Support the election campaign with electronic communication;
- Use your online communication tools to support other media outlets.

#### **Dont's**

- Don't just put your party programme and organogram online; a website must offer added value to the visitors;
- A seldomly updated website will discourage visitors to revisit your website in the future;
- Keeping the website up-to-date should not be the responsibility of technicians, but of the party cadre;
- A website or a database with email addresses is vulnerable to hackers, don't forget to take safety measures.

### **Civic Education and Empowerment**

All healthy, fully functioning democracies require a political culture composed of active participants who understand what it means to be democratic citizens. Wherever free and fair elections are held, a democratic culture is needed: people accustomed to voting, running for elective office, understanding how their government works, seeking out different sources of information to make informed choices, forming advocacy and public-interest groups to influence political outcomes in a consensus-building, non-coercive political system, and creating voluntary organizations to meet societal needs not met by government or the commercial sector. 'Civic education' may be thought of as a foundation on which free, non-coercive, democratic polities can rest.

Moreover, since many democracies often witness increased apathy, atomization, and a dilution in citizen participation and civic behaviour, as civic values are not properly reinforced and are allowed to go stale, the empowerment of citizens must be encouraged and pursued alongside civic education.



**Partner in Democracy**

Empowering people through democracy must today be seen as a central element in the construction of a global civic culture. It is no longer some vanguard or self-appointed elites but the people themselves who should decide about how to organize their collective life and what future to choose.

Civic education can empower citizens by providing them with an important knowledge for safeguarding the fundamental rights of citizens. Governments are forced to take preventive action under the pressure of public opinion. Giving voice to those who have complaints is more likely to prevent major social disasters.

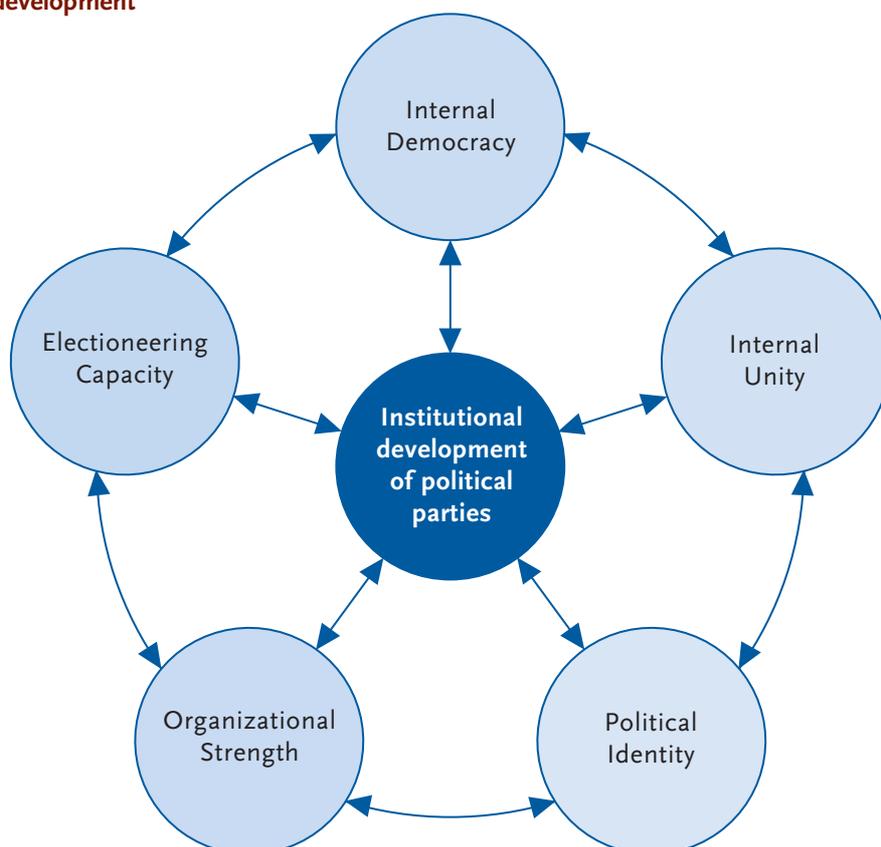
Interdependence and mutual causation again exist between civic education, empowerment and development. In the long run, successful development depends on democracy, and democracy on committed and well-informed citizens. Development is not a technocratic enterprise to be implemented from central government downwards but requires the active participation of all members of society.

**Do's**

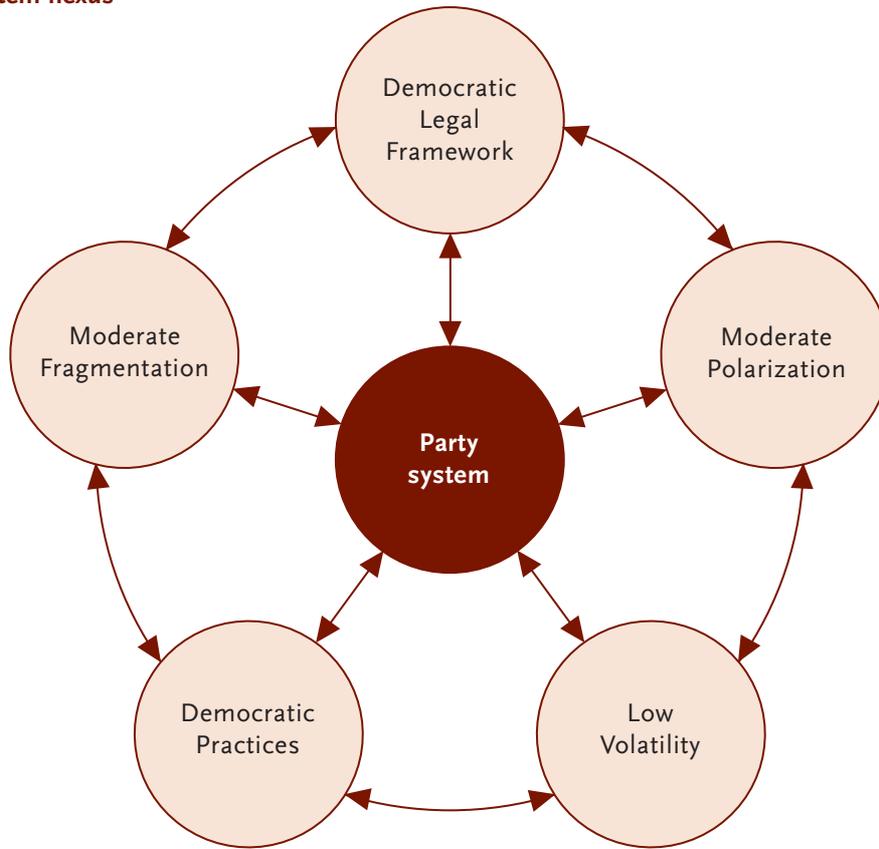
- Encourage dialogue and interaction within and between parties and civic organizations.
- Draw ideas and suggestions from citizens and organizations.
- Give a voice to the less powerful.
- Encourage wide participation.

# Issues and Indicators for the Institutional Development of Political Parties

## Institutional party development



**Political party-party system nexus**



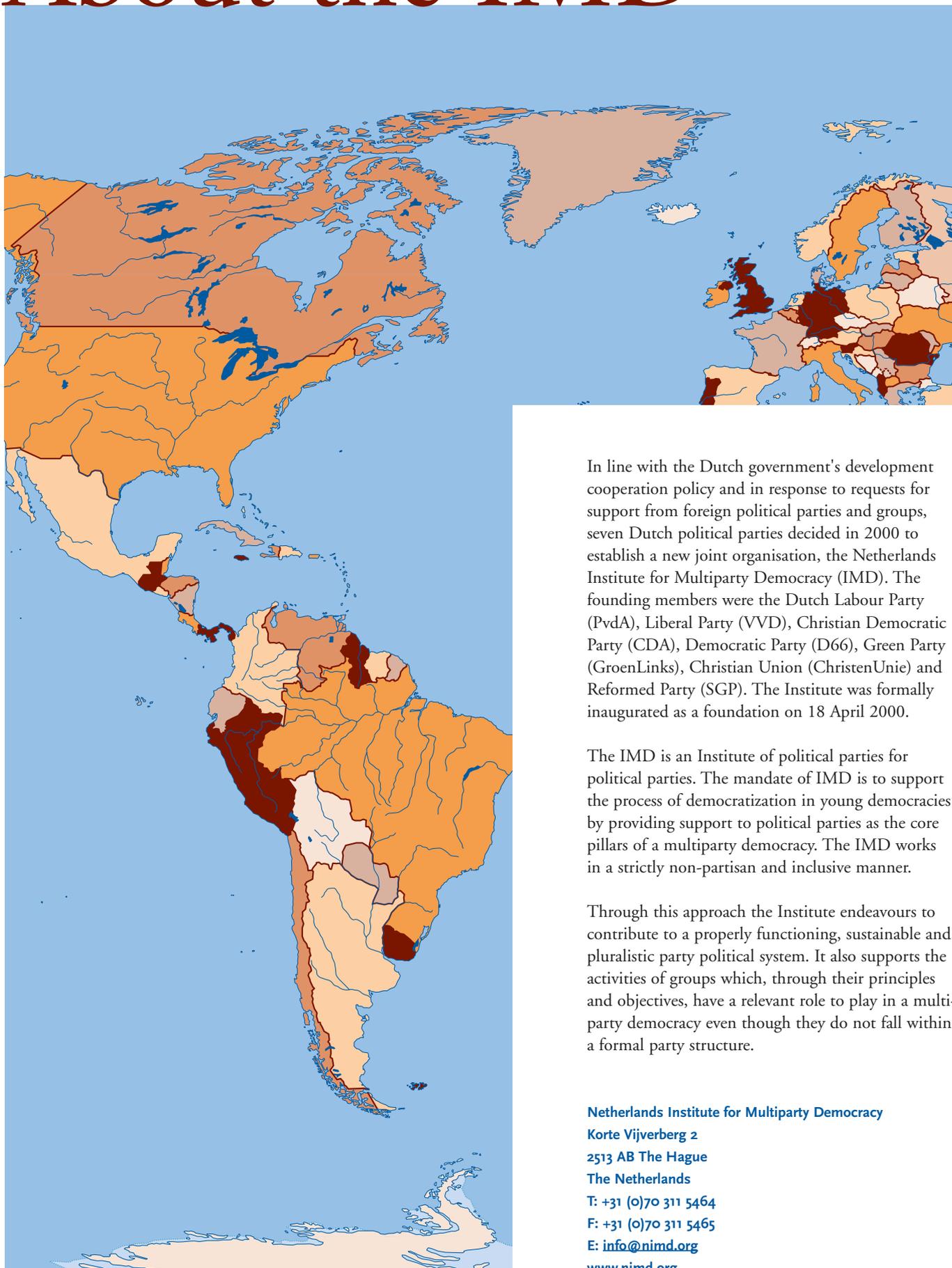
**Party-civil society relationship**



Dimension	Issues	Indicators	Instruments <i>also see our website <a href="http://www.nimd.org">www.nimd.org</a> for helpful links</i>
<b>Institutional development criteria</b>	<b>Organizational Strength</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 Are there within the party enough qualified people willing to contribute to its activities?</li> <li>2 Are money and other material resources such as offices available?</li> <li>3 Is there an effective application of an Organizational Development Strategy?</li> <li>4 Is there a rational management of resources?</li> <li>5 Does the party have a recruitment and expansion capacity?</li> <li>6 Is the party organized at the national, regional and local levels?</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 'Volunteer' Files listing availability and skills of party activists at every territorial level.</li> <li>2 Fundraising activities and campaigns, donations.</li> <li>3 Organizational development plan and meetings to produce, adjust, update and implement it.</li> <li>4 Transparent record and book-keeping, allocation of resources according to Plan or Strategy, internal and external audits.</li> <li>5 Training courses and/or programme, membership drives, leaflets and literature about the party's objectives and activities.</li> <li>6 Promote development of broad-based, programmatic aggregative party.</li> <li>7 Develop Website.</li> </ol>
	<b>Internal Democracy</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 Is the party functioning according to established rules and procedures?</li> <li>2 Is decision-making democratic and based on party statutes and current laws?</li> <li>3 Is there a meaningful decentralization of economic resources?</li> <li>4 Can the rank-and-file exercise oversight over the party leadership?</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 Party by-laws and impartial bodies for the peaceful resolution of disputes and to ensure due process and appeals, specialized work commissions.</li> <li>2 Distributing and making widely available printed copies of legal documents and applicable party manuals, regular and fair internal elections, appointments based on merit/skills.</li> <li>3 Resource Allocation Plan according to needs and priorities, independent Party Commission to develop such plan in consultation at the local, intermediate and national levels.</li> <li>4 Elections, audits and other mechanisms such as leadership reviews and recall of leaders.</li> </ol>
	<b>Political Identity</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 Is there a strong sense of political purpose and sharing of political ideas among militants?</li> <li>2 Are political practices in agreement with the above?</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 Party Programme and ideological 'manifesto' or statement of principles.</li> <li>2 Debates, conferences, workshops and seminars to evaluate, generate, discuss and clarify political and ideological standpoints, practices and issues.</li> </ol>
	<b>Internal Unity</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 Can deep personal or political differences within the party be avoided?</li> <li>2 Is there a clear understanding of the party's ideological and political standpoint?</li> <li>3 Are the frequency and number of disputes brought before party organs low?</li> <li>4 Are there significant discrepancies in legislative voting behaviour?</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 Public statements made by authorized persons and proper party instances, including public information offices, according to party policy and decisions.</li> <li>2 School to train party cadres in political philosophy and party ideology and policy.</li> <li>3 Records and files of rulings about disputes, complaints and resignations.</li> <li>4 Legislative voting record files.</li> <li>5 Promotion of cross-regional party structures.</li> <li>6 Seek to restrict the capacity of MPs to change parties once elected.</li> <li>7 Limit membership turnover.</li> </ol>
	<b>Electioneering Capacity</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 Are there enough financial resources?</li> <li>2 Is there good access to the mass media?</li> <li>3 Are there enough human resources and committed party workers?</li> <li>4 Is there a good procedure for selecting and exposing party candidates?</li> <li>5 Is there a Strategic Campaign Plan ready to be applied?</li> <li>6 Is the party organization broad-based?</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 Efficient and transparent allocation of funds.</li> <li>2 Public relations and media commission in charge of ensuring access.</li> <li>3 Canvassing among militants to ascertain availability and skills and to enlist their support. Have dues-paying members.</li> <li>4 Primary elections, public meetings, media interviews, visits of candidates to constituents' homes, neighbourhoods and organizations.</li> <li>5 Development of a Strategic Campaign Plan.</li> <li>6 Establishing of branch structures in every province.</li> </ol>

Dimension	Issues	Indicators	Instruments <i>also see our website <a href="http://www.nimd.org">www.nimd.org</a> for helpful links</i>
<b>Political party-party system nexus</b>	<b>Democratic Legal Framework</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 Does there exist an enabling legal environment ?</li> <li>2 Does the party have specialized personnel with the proper understanding of legal rules and procedures?</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 Constitutional and legal guarantees for free and fair electoral competition.</li> <li>2 Party Legal Commission which publishes and distributes in user-friendly language all significant norms and procedures.</li> <li>3 Seminars, conferences and workshops to gain legal insights for party activities.</li> <li>4 Promote electoral rules that limit the number of parties.</li> <li>5 Encourage culture of consensus-building.</li> <li>6 Encourage loyalty.</li> </ol>
	<b>Moderate Fragmentation</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 Is the legal environment being effectively used?</li> </ol>	
	<b>Moderate Polarization</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 Are there an adequate number of parties in the system?</li> </ol>	
	<b>Low Volatility</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 Is the ideological and political distance between parties manageable?</li> </ol>	
	<b>Democratic Practices</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 Does the party have the loyalty of militants and voters?</li> <li>2 Does the party engage in democratic behaviour?</li> </ol>	
	<b>Party-civil society relationship</b>	<b>Communication channels</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 Is there confidence between parties and CSOs?</li> <li>2 Is there an overlap in membership between parties and CSOs?</li> </ol>
<b>Professional and autonomous mass media</b>		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 Are mass media autonomous from the state and from specific business groups?</li> <li>2 What is the degree of trust between parties and the media?</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 Invest in long-term relationships with respectable journalists and newspapers.</li> <li>2 Encourage editors and journalists to work on a Code of Conduct.</li> </ol>
<b>The application of ICTs</b>		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 Does the party have a website and newsletter?</li> <li>2 Do party cadre and members have access to the Internet?</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 Adopt an Internet strategy as part of the party's overall communication strategy.</li> <li>2 Encourage the use of Internet in general for education and learning purposes.</li> </ol>
<b>Civil education and empowerment</b>		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 Is wide participation encouraged?</li> <li>2 Are ideas and suggestions from citizens and organizations used?</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 Organize rallies and meetings that are open to the public.</li> <li>2 Create and communicate policies that originated in public opinion.</li> </ol>
<b>Collaborative exchanges</b>		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 Are exchanges organized with media, CSO's and citizen groups?</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 Organize discussion meetings with CSO's and the public.</li> </ol>

# About the IMD



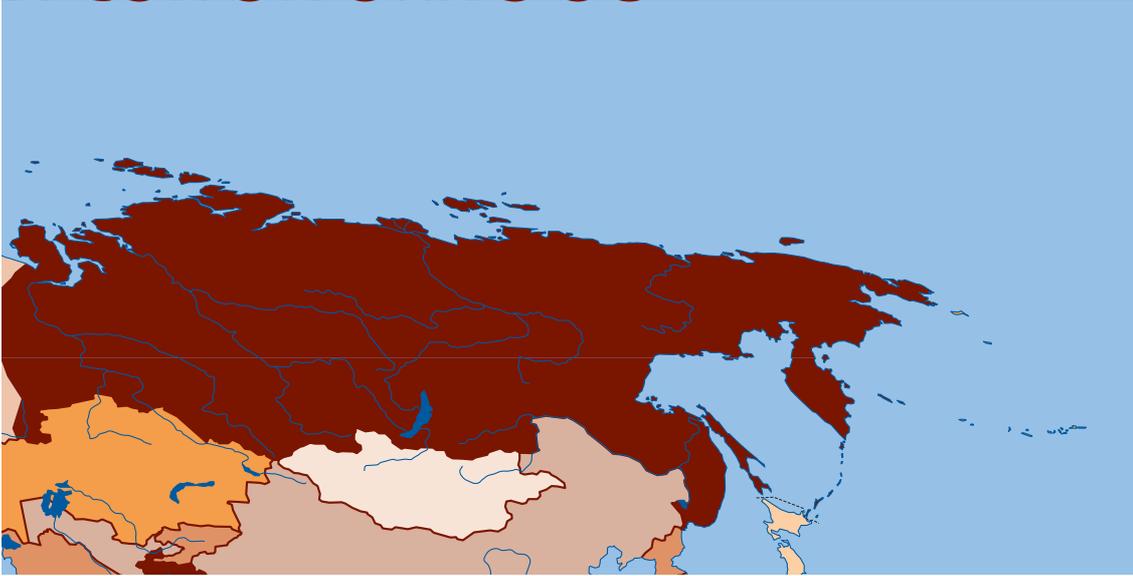
In line with the Dutch government's development cooperation policy and in response to requests for support from foreign political parties and groups, seven Dutch political parties decided in 2000 to establish a new joint organisation, the Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (IMD). The founding members were the Dutch Labour Party (PvdA), Liberal Party (VVD), Christian Democratic Party (CDA), Democratic Party (D66), Green Party (GroenLinks), Christian Union (ChristenUnie) and Reformed Party (SGP). The Institute was formally inaugurated as a foundation on 18 April 2000.

The IMD is an Institute of political parties for political parties. The mandate of IMD is to support the process of democratization in young democracies by providing support to political parties as the core pillars of a multiparty democracy. The IMD works in a strictly non-partisan and inclusive manner.

Through this approach the Institute endeavours to contribute to a properly functioning, sustainable and pluralistic party political system. It also supports the activities of groups which, through their principles and objectives, have a relevant role to play in a multiparty democracy even though they do not fall within a formal party structure.

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