Against all odds: aiding political parties in Georgia and Ukraine
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CHAPTER ONE: RESEARCHING PARTY ASSISTANCE

Due to the paucity of existing research, there is no common wisdom, let alone established standards, on how to study political party assistance. This chapter addresses a number of questions which pertain to the scholarly investigation of party assistance. The first section explains how political party assistance is conceptualized in this research by highlighting its relation to adjacent phenomena - foremost democracy assistance and democracy promotion. The next two sections identify the type of case study research undertaken in this thesis and then reveal the key parameters - variables, time-frame, level of analysis, and population - of this case study research. The final section discusses the sources - interviews and ‘gray literature’ - from which data have been collected for the case studies (chapters five and six). This section particularly reflects on the pitfalls associated with interviewing as a method of data-gathering and on how these pitfalls have been dealt with.

1.1. THE INTERNATIONAL DIMENSION OF DEMOCRATIZATION

In a strict sense, democratization is never fully endogenous. Around two thirds of current democracies are said to be products of foreign imposition or intervention (Whitehead 1996: 252), and of the ones that are not, few, most of them found in the West, can credibly boast to be home-grown. The ‘international dimension’, then, is almost always at play in democratization in some form and to some degree. A telling example is that in Africa former British colonies have almost without exception adopted a Westminster-type parliamentary system, while a majority of former French colonies are now in majority semi-presidential after the French example (Van Cranenburgh 2008: 954). The international dimension of democratization encompasses different types of mechanisms and processes, only one of which is the targeted promotion of democracy abroad. Democracy promotion, in turn, involves many different possible policies (Schraeder 2003: 26), distinguished, among other things, by the degree of consent to the policy on the part of the target state, and ranging from approaches in which democratic institutions and procedures are directly targeted, to approaches in which the promotion of democracy is achieved through activity in areas which indirectly affect democracy. A democracy promotion policy that has a direct bearing on democratic institutions, and that is executed with the consent of recipients, is democracy assistance (or aid). Alongside governing institutions, the judiciary, parliament, civil society actors and others, political parties feature as
common recipients of democracy assistance. In sum, as table one illustrates, political party assistance is a subtype of democracy assistance, which itself is a subtype of democracy promotion, which in turn is one element in the overall international dimension of democratization.

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Table 1. Defining attributes of the international dimension of democratization, democracy promotion, democracy assistance, and political party assistance

Democracy promotion is different from other elements in the international dimension of democratization in that it is a policy which purposefully seeks to foster democratization, while other elements in the international dimension are either uncontrolled or merely contribute to democratization by way of a side-effect of other policies. In addition to purposeful democracy promotion, democratization is influenced from the outside by diffuse ‘contagion’ effects and by socialization resulting from linkage to democracies. Contagion, or ‘inspiration’, takes place mainly in the form a demonstration effect, which leads state actors to want to imitate or emulate foreign examples (Jacoby 2006). Socialization, understood here simply as ‘a process of learning in which norms and ideals are transmitted from one party to another’ (Checkel 1999a) familiarizes actors in non-democracies with democratic values and practices, for instance through integration into international organizations, thereby increasing the likelihood that these actors will accept and adopt these values and practices. Contagion and socialization effects are enhanced by linkage through interstate relations between non-democracies and democracies, through transnational civil society, trade agreements, and more. The spatial clustering of democracies and autocracies suggests that distance of non-democracies to democracies is an important predictor of democratization or the failure thereof (Gleditsch and Ward 2006: Wejnert 2005).

Following Schmitter and Brouwer (1999: 13), democracy promotion is defined here as consisting ‘of all overt and voluntary activities adopted, supported, and (directly or
indirectly) implemented by (public or private) foreign actors explicitly designed to contribute to the political liberalization of autocratic regimes and the subsequent democratization of autocratic regimes in specific recipient countries’. Inherent in this definition is that the promotion of democracy is always an explicit purpose of these activities. Democracy promotion includes ‘hard’ coercive policies, with military intervention on the extreme end, and ‘soft’ non-coercive policies, epitomized by democracy assistance. Furthermore, promoting democracy can be done either by directly seeking to affect the functioning of political institutions, as in democracy assistance, or indirectly, while remaining mindful of the objective of promoting democracy.

Next to democracy assistance, the following democracy promotion policies can be distinguished: First, (armed) intervention aimed at enforcing the removal of an authoritarian regime to be supplanted by a more democratic one is the most coercive democracy promotion strategy. As such, armed intervention has been found to be relatively ineffectual (Pickering and Peceny 2006). Second, diplomacy in state-to-state relations has the potential to lead undemocratic leaders to abandon undemocratic practices (Adesnik and McFaul 2006). With rhetorical action as its principal instrument, diplomacy can convey the message to undemocratic leaders that their policies and type of government are inappropriate or illegitimate. When elections are looming in less-than-democratic states, democratic governments and intergovernmental organizations often seek to convince undemocratic leaders of the importance of free and fair elections. The diplomatic effort of Western actors during the Orange Revolution in Ukraine counts as an instance of particularly effective democracy promotion (Pifer 2007). Third, conditionality policies, including sanctions as a response to non-compliance with rules or norms, have on several occasions turned out to be an effective instrument of democracy promotion, especially when linked with a strong external incentive such as accession to the European Union (Grabbe 2006; Schimmelfennig 2007). Finally, naming and shaming of governments raises the cost of undemocratic practices. When the failure to adhere to democratic norms is credibly exposed, undemocratic leaders face dilemmas in legitimating their rule, both domestically and in their international relations. Opposite the promotion of democracy, authoritarianism is sometimes also bolstered, and democratization undermined from the outside, mainly by propping up incumbent authoritarian leaders in friendly states (e.g. Ambrosio 2007). Efforts to ‘promote democracy backwards’ (Burnell 2006) in the early twenty-first century have been pursued by China and Russia among others. In part, these efforts are a reaction against the perceived threat of democracy promotion to regime continuity domestically and in neighboring states. In the former Soviet
Union, an informal ‘authoritarian international’ (Silitski 2007) is said to have been established of leaders who support each other in their efforts to pre-empt an electoral revolution of the type that has occurred in Georgia, Ukraine, and Kyrgyzstan.

Democracy promotion, including democracy assistance, has expanded considerably over the last two decades. More countries are now engaged in promoting democracy, and they spend a larger percentage of foreign aid on promoting democracy than before. According to one calculation, the share of democracy assistance in official development assistance grew from 0.5% to 5% between 1991 and 2000 (World Bank 2004: 211). Increasingly, promoting democracy has been recognized as an appropriate thing for states and other actors to do. The establishment of democracy promotion as a ‘world value’ (McFaul 2004) is reflected by, among others, the creation of the Community of Democracies, the members of which have committed themselves to promoting democracy, and the signing of international declarations such as the Warsaw Declaration, which initiated the Community of Democracies, and the The Hague Statement on Enhancing the European Profile in Democracy Assistance.

Three factors do most to explain the increase of democracy promotion in recent decades. First, as a result of the collapse of communist regimes during 1989-1991 and a range of political openings around the same time in other parts of the world, a larger number of countries than before became natural targets of democracy promotion and recipients of assistance. Second, the end of the Cold War invalidated the argument, widely popular during the Cold War, that authoritarian regimes should be supported if they are on the same side in the stand-off against the socialist bloc. Third, the idea that liberal democracy is the most legitimate form of government, both normatively and because of the desirable consequences that democracy breeds, became more widely accepted (Fukuyama 1992). Domestically, democracy protects citizens from arbitrary rule, grants personal freedoms, political liberties and the right to self-determination, and enables human development, among other things (Dahl 1998: 45). Though the exact relationship between democracy and development remains disputed, there has also been an increasing recognition that, against earlier beliefs, democracy does not stand in the way of economic growth and may even provide better conditions for economic growth in poor countries than autocratic rule (Siegle et al. 2004). Indeed, ‘the idea that many countries face a cruel choice between development and democracy has been supplanted by a growing appreciation that these two desirable goals are related in complex ways’ (Burnell 2000a: 43). In the international domain, democracies are believed to be more prone to peace, at least in relation to each other (Owen 1994), harboring the promise of a more secure, less conflict-ridden world.
Democracies moreover make more reliable economic trading partners (Perlin 2003: 6-7).

Being not as visible and not as contested, democracy assistance is on ‘the quiet side’ of the spectrum of democracy promotion strategies (Carothers 2007: 10). It is distinct in at least two respects: first, it is invariably implemented with the consent of its recipients (Burnell 2000b: 4) and second, it is implemented by specialized actors, for whom democracy assistance is a prominent area of activity or an exclusive area of activity. These specialized actors include intergovernmental organizations, government agencies and nongovernmental organizations, of which many are at arm’s length of a government bureaucracy. Typically, not necessarily, the assistance is not-for-profit and supported by grants. Most democracy assistance is directed at one of three comprehensive areas: the electoral process, state institutions, and civil society (Carothers 1999: 88). Assistance to the electoral process can be divided into two types of assistance: assistance aimed at the conduct of free and fair elections, and assistance to political parties. As democracy assistance tout court, party assistance is implemented by specialized actors, which, in the case of party assistance, receive the bulk of their funding from the government while being formally autonomous. In contrast to some other forms of democracy assistance, party assistance is supposed to be only technical: providers of assistance are not allowed to hand out direct financial donations. Party assistance is related to, but separate from other types of democracy assistance, including electoral assistance and legislative strengthening, which are termed ‘indirect party aid’ by Carothers (2006a: 90-2). Party assistance in the strict definition applied in this thesis is aimed at improving the performance of the primary representative and procedural functions of parties (cf. Bartolini and Mair 2001) and at creating a viable party system by working with several parties simultaneously. In addition to being distinct from other types of democracy assistance, it is also distinct from other forms of external influence on parties, such as for-profit consultancy and the inclusion in party internationals.

1.2. Case Study Research

This research project comprises case studies of assistance to political parties in two countries over a certain period of time. According to Gerring (2004: 341), a case study is best defined as ‘an in-depth study of a single unit (a relatively bounded phenomenon) where the scholar’s aim is to elucidate features of a larger class of similar phenomena’. The relevance of a single case study for cases that are not investigated is also featured in George and Bennett’s (2005: 5) definition of a case
study as ‘the detailed examination of an aspect of a historical episode to develop or test historical explanations that may be generalizable to other events’. In his influential classification of case study types, Lijphart (1971: 691) distinguishes between six types - atheoretical, interpretative, hypothesis-generating, theory-confirming, theory-infirming, and deviant case studies. The type of case studies conducted in this thesis is identified as being of the hypothesis-generating genus, touted by Sartori (1991: 252) as the most valuable type in comparative political research. Since hardly any theoretical claims on party assistance have been formulated as yet, the case studies conducted here could not be theory-confirming, theory-infirming, or deviant. Neither, however, are the case studies atheoretical or interpretative, since there is an explicit interest in formulating generalizable propositions beyond the singular findings from the two cases under investigation.

If the variables that have the biggest weight in explaining the outcome are present in other cases in equal weight, then the findings from the two case studies in this thesis can be assumed to be replicable to those other cases. The main argument that is unfolded in the following chapters is that domestic determinants of party development in Georgia and Ukraine have practically presented a sufficient condition for the failure of party assistance. The foremost of these domestic determinants - a less-than-democratic political context and a high degree of volatility in party politics - are found widely. Of the roughly one hundred countries that have entered a ‘transition’ in recent decades, a small minority has consolidated liberal democracy (Carothers 2002: 9). Today, most political regimes in the world are neither liberal democracies nor closed autocracies (Diamond 2002; Roessler and Howard 2007). At the same time, a high degree of volatility in party politics, mostly referred to as ‘weak party system institutionalization’, is a common diagnosis for party systems, whether in Latin America (Mainwaring and Scully 1995; Sanchez 2008b), Africa (Basedau and Stroh 2008; Kuenzi and Lambright 2005), South East Asia (Stockton 2001; Ufen 2007) or the post-communist world (Casal Bertoa 2008; Meleshевич 2007). Weak party system institutionalization and defective democracy are often found together in countries since the two phenomena are known to reinforce each other (Thames and Robbins 2007; Tóka 1997). A cursory overview of the approximately seventy-five countries where party assistance is provided today (Carothers 2006a: 86) teaches that the combination of weak party system institutionalization and a less-than-democratic political context are typical for a majority of these countries. In sum, in the large number of states where three conditions are present - the provision of party assistance, a high degree of volatility in party politics, and a less-than-democratic
political context - are the findings from the two case studies of this thesis expected to be replicable to at least some degree.

Since it is believed that party assistance generally does not produce significant effects (see page 11), the two case studies of this thesis are presumed to be typical with respect to the outcome value. More often than not, indeed, party assistance has not been able to make inroads in helping to transform parties and party systems. As noted earlier, case-oriented research in which an outcome does not occur is relatively uncommon. The selection of cases with a negative outcome is warranted here because a positive outcome of the dependent variable, though rare, is possible (Mahoney and Goertz 2004). The two case studies are conducted parallel to each other; the analysis is carried out diachronically within the boundaries of the individual cases. Depending on the way the term is understood, the research method applied in the case studies may be associated with ‘process-tracing’. Since the outcome value in this study is negative, process-tracing here cannot be understood as establishing a causal mechanism in the sense of dividing that causal mechanism into smaller steps to examine exactly how causes have led to an observed outcome (e.g. Van Evera 1997: 64). The aim is rather to put forward propositions about how the outcome of interest (the failure of political party assistance) relates to its explanatory variables. The evidence to support these propositions is disparate and often inconclusive. In the words of Gerring (2007: 171), most distinctive about process-tracing is indeed ‘the noncomparability of adjacent pieces of evidence. All pieces of evidence are relevant to the central argument (they are not ‘random’ but they do not comprise observations in a larger sample).’

Although case studies deal with historical episodes, the case studies conducted here do not amount to merely a historical account of the phenomenon of party assistance in Georgia and Ukraine during a given period of time: ‘systematic process analysis is a very different project from the one in which most historians engage. It demands examination of the histories behind outcomes but one guided more extensively by theory than are most of those undertaken by historians’ (Hall 2003: 395). Different bodies of theory guide the investigation of the explanations for the failure of party assistance in Georgia and Ukraine. Where the focus is on the external dimension, theories of norm diffusion, developed mainly by social constructivist scholars working in the field of International Relations, assume central position. Where the focus is on the internal dimension, on the other hand, the rich literature on party politics from the field of Comparative Politics is key. Four topics from this literature have particular relevance in this research: types of parties and party systems, party politics in post-
communist societies, party politics in undemocratic settings, and party system institutionalization.

1.3. RESEARCH PARAMETERS

Any theoretical model in the social sciences contains at least the following five parameters: ‘First, every model pertains to a certain level of analysis - individual, group, national, world-systemic, or some intermediate gradation. Second, it has one or more dependent variables. Third, it has one or more explanatory variables. Fourth, it applies to a certain relevant universe of cases. And fifth, it applies to events or processes that take place during a certain period of time’ (Coppedge 1999: 466). In this section these five parameters are made explicit. In the process, the scope and boundaries of the investigation are laid bare.

The level of analysis to which this investigation pertains is neither a micro-level of individuals nor a macro-level of states or the global systemic level, but an intermediate level of organizations, groups. Since the question of interest concerns the possible effect of party assistance programs on political parties, the units of analysis are the recipients of political party assistance - political parties - rather than its providers. The dependent variable in this investigation is the effect from party assistance programs on political parties. For both cases, the outcome of the dependent variable has a negative value: party assistance has generated very limited positive effect on relevant parties in Georgia and Ukraine over the course of the period under investigation. The task at hand is to explain this negative outcome: why have providers of assistance not succeeded in transferring the gist of assistance programs to parties? Since the limited effect of party assistance programs finds expression in the persistent weakness of political parties, an equally crucial question is why parties have remained so poorly institutionalized. While the first question asks about the adequacy of the party assistance programs crafted by foreign actors, the second question is concerned with domestic constraints on the development of stable parties. The range of explanatory variables involved in this investigation, accordingly, is divided between variables which relate to domestic factors (‘the internal dimension’) and variables which relate to outside factors (the ‘external’, or ‘international’ dimension). The explanatory variable representing the external dimension is the input of political party assistance by foreign actors. Different domestic constraints on stable and democratic party development in Georgia and Ukraine collectively constitute the explanatory variable of the internal dimension. As chapter four will argue, the domestic constraints on party development are primarily divided into two outcomes of
party politics in Georgia and Ukraine, which in turn have been conditioned by three key explanatory variables.

The universe of cases consists of all countries in which political parties receive, or in the recent past have received party assistance. The two U.S.-based providers of assistance, the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) and the International Republican Institute (IRI) have programs in about sixty countries, while the main German political foundations Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS) and Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) are active in over eighty countries and engage in party assistance in most of these. Most other providers of party assistance have no offices in recipient countries and work in fewer of those. As noted, the cases of Georgia and Ukraine are presumed to be most-similar to cases where the same domestic constraints on stable party development are observed, and where providers of assistance have executed noteworthy programs. Adding geography and political legacy to the equation, replication of the findings from the two cases of this thesis appears most promising in such states as Armenia, Kazakhstan, Moldova, and Kyrgyzstan. The likelihood of analogous findings for the failure of assistance elsewhere, then, is highest in countries which share the basic conditions of the failure of assistance plus contingent factors such as geography and legacy, followed by states which merely share the basic conditions.

The period of time during which the events and processes that are studied here unfolded is a roughly equal number of years before and after the 'electoral revolutions' which ushered in regime change in Georgia and Ukraine. For both Georgia and Ukraine, this boils down to two legislative elections (and between-election periods) before, and two legislative elections after the Rose and Orange Revolutions, respectively. A few simple factors inform and justify the choice to somewhat narrow the time frame to 1999-2008 for Georgia and 1998-2007 for Ukraine: first, the time periods are sufficiently protracted to track possible alterations of strategy and change within parties and the elusive party systems of Georgia and Ukraine. Second, only a few providers of assistance were active in Georgia and Ukraine during the 1990s. Party assistance in those years was limited in scope, and obtaining reliable data from these initial years is even more cumbersome than it is for more recent years. Third, the occurrence of the Revolutions has raised expectations about the role and the effect of the assistance. In the case of both the Rose and Orange Revolutions, democracy assistance efforts, including assistance to political parties, have been ascribed much weight in explanations of why the regime change occurred. Concerning the post-Revolution period, much optimism has existed (initially) regarding the chances of successful democratization and the role Western actors could play in helping to
enforce durable political change in both countries. In light of this, the inability of party assistance to have an impact on parties is a salient given.

1.4. Sources and Data

The principal sources of information used for the case studies of political party assistance in Georgia and Ukraine have been, first, a large number of interviews with persons involved in party assistance either as recipients or as providers, and second, various types of documents composed and archived by the providers of assistance and the funding institutions of party assistance. These are primary sources; secondary sources about party assistance are rare.

Close to one hundred interviews have been conducted for this research. Most interviewees fall under one of the following categories: staff, including policy officers, at the central offices (locations: Washington D.C., Berlin, The Hague) of providers of assistance dealing with the design and implementation of party assistance programs; leading and supporting staff, both Western expatriate and local, at the country offices (Kyiv and Tbilisi) of providers of assistance; political party representatives formerly or currently dealing with the international relations of their parties (often called ‘international secretaries’); and representatives of political parties who have participated or otherwise been involved in assistance programs. In addition, a number of academics, journalists and NGO representatives have been interviewed in both Georgia and Ukraine, mainly in order to receive alternative assessments of the state of political party (system) development and of the (perceived) impact of party assistance programs.

Since the subject of inquiry in this research is well-defined, a sample of possible informants could be constructed prior to the process of interviewing. The initial selection of informants, in other words, involved non-probability sampling in which informants were selected on the basis of positional criteria (Tansey 2007: 770). Typically, several persons in each country office of the providers of assistance and from each relevant political party, who were directly involved in party assistance, have been interviewed. From other categories, at least one person per party or provider of assistance was singled out prior to the actual interviewing process. After the start of the interviewing process, more informants were found through chain-referral or ‘snowballing’ (Burnham et al. 2004: 207; Richards 1996). In practical terms, each informant was requested to provide names of further possible informants, who in turn could point to others. In this stage of the interviewing process, informants were
selected on the basis of a combination of positional and reputational criteria (Tansey 2007: 770). Probability sampling has not been applied in any stage of the interviewing process.

Because of the politically sensitive nature of the subject of party assistance, there has been a risk of missing crucial information in interviews. To minimize this risk, informants have been assured that they would remain anonymous. An overview of the interviews that have been held, including names and positions of informants, as well as the time and location of the interviews, can be provided to anyone interested on a condition of confidentiality. Interviews have not been recorded; instead, detailed notes were made which can be consulted by anyone interested, again, on a condition of confidentiality. To obtain as much valuable information as possible, finally, it has been stressed during interviews that the data would be used for scholarly purposes only.11 The form of interviews has invariably been semi-structured. In semi-structured interviews, the ‘main questions and script are fixed, but interviewers are able to improvise follow-up questions and to explore meanings and areas of interest that emerge’ (Arksey and Knight 1999: 7). Per category of informants, a set of similar questions was asked: party representatives, for instance, was always asked how they assess the impact of assistance programs; practitioners, for instance, was always asked after their relationship with the central offices of their organizations. In addition to these fixed questions, informants were given the opportunity to emphasize issues which they deemed particularly relevant. With few exceptions, interviews have been conducted in languages that were either native or near-native to interviewees.

Interviewing as a method of data-collection comes with a number of pitfalls. A first problem is that, due to the substantial turnover in the organizations providing assistance and in parties, informants may not produce much reliable information about assistance of several years earlier. Moreover, particularly representatives of political parties tend to want to look forward and not recall past events and actions. The high rate of party turnover in both Georgia and Ukraine means that many parties that have received assistance during the time period under research no longer exist and that some of those that do, have been around for only a few years. Taken together, institutional memory within parties and providers of assistance is often limited. The way to counteract this dilemma has been to take interviews, whenever possible, from former employees of the providers of assistance, from former representatives of still existing parties, and from representatives of now defunct parties. Nonetheless, significantly more information has been retrieved about recent assistance than about assistance of several years ago.
Second, non-probability sampling of informants from political parties of informants may instigate considerable bias (Tansey 2007: 769). Informants from parties probably are not representative of their parties, especially because they are generally more experienced in speaking with outsiders. The problem of selection bias is aggravated by the chain-referral mechanism of obtaining new informants, as informants are likely to refer to like-minded persons. Given that sampling criteria could not have been different than positional for some important categories of informants, non-probability sampling in this research has been imperative.

Third, informants sometimes make claims contradictory to claims of other informants. In some cases this may be because informants, many of which are directly involved in the assistance effort, have an interest in presenting a skewed account of the assistance. A general strategy to counter the pitfalls outlined above, and one that particularly addresses the last-mentioned pitfall, has been ‘triangulation’ of sources. According to Arksey and Knight (1999: 21), ‘the basic idea of triangulation is that data are obtained from a wide range of different and multiple sources’. Triangulation is advisable not only to adjudicate between contradictory claims, but also to verify and corroborate any significant data point obtained through interviews. Multiplication of data points has been achieved by consulting documents, whenever available, to back up claims by informants, and by speaking with several persons about the same subject. In addition, it has been found to be informative to speak with former staff of the providers of assistance, and with former party members. Within parties, interviews have been conducted with a range of persons from party leaders to rank-and-file activists. At the providers of assistance and their funding institutions, interviews have been conducted with persons ranging from high-ranking officials and policy-makers to junior policy staff.

A second main type of sources consulted for this research are documents compiled by the providers and funders of party assistance. These are, first, publicly available strategy documents, evaluations, policy guidelines etc., which in most cases are available from the websites of the concerned organizations. These documents do not discuss party assistance in Georgia and Ukraine specifically, with the exception of a handful of quarterly reports of NDI and IRI that are available from USAID’s Development Experience Clearinghouse website. Instead, many of these documents take on either party assistance overall, or democracy assistance and promotion in Georgia and Ukraine. A second type of documents, sometimes referred to as ‘gray literature’, that have been consulted is not publicly available. These documents comprise work plans and reports on concluded activities. On occasion, these documents have been received directly from informants. Besides, a request has been
filed to USAID, with a reference to the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), to obtain all work plans of NDI and IRI concerning their activities in Georgia and Ukraine since 1999. USAID has been unable, or unwilling, to provide most requested documents. All work plans of NDI in Ukraine and IRI in Georgia remained missing. In addition, work plans of NDI in Georgia for 2003 and of IRI in Ukraine for 2001 were not provided. NDI and IRI work plans and other written documentation have been used mainly to corroborate data from interviews. Since a considerable share of NDI and IRI documentation has been missing, and there is no publicly available equivalent to NDI and IRI work plans and quarterly reports with regard to the Stiftungen, interview data have been handled with reserve.