



Confronting the Weakest Link: Aiding Political Parties in New Democracies

Thomas Carothers

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Beset with persistent problems of self-interest, corruption, ideological incoherence, and narrow electoral majorities, political parties are the weakest link in many democratic transitions around the world. A large and ever-growing number of U.S., European, and multilateral assistance programs seek to help parties become effective pro-democratic actors. But given the depth of the problems, is success possible? *Confronting the Weakest Link* is a pathbreaking study of international aid for political parties. Beginning with a penetrating analysis of party shortcomings in developing and postcommunist countries, Thomas Carothers draws on extensive field research to diagnose chronic deficiencies in party aid, assess its overall impact, and offer practical ideas for doing better. This critical analysis spans Latin America, Central and Eastern Europe, the former Soviet Union, Africa, the Middle East, and Asia. It sheds invaluable light on a major element of the contemporary challenge of democracy building, a subject now occupying center stage in the international policy arena.

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