

MULTILATERAL DIPLOMACY AS A PROMOTER OF DEMOCRACY AND GOOD GOVERNANCE: CONCEPTUAL AND METHODOLOGICAL ASPECTS

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Abstract. *Multilateral diplomacy conducted through intergovernmental organizations, forums, and international structures based on treaties and international law, functions as a mechanism for promoting universal values, enhancing democratic culture, and facilitating progress in socio-economic development, while also supporting the implementation of democratic reforms aimed to align national development policies with international standards.*

The present article explores prominent scholarly works in the field, primarily addressing the conceptualizations and explanations of the evolution, forms, and functions of multilateral diplomacy. In this context, it underlines the role of international organizations in promoting sustainability, democratic principles, political culture, and the impact of external assistance on democratic development policies and good governance. Drawing on the frameworks of the UN system and the European Union, the authors highlight the normative and regulatory dimensions related to regional strategies and the global agenda for development and democracy promotion.

Keywords: *multilateral diplomacy, international organizations, democratic values, good governance, democracy promotion, external assistance*

Introduction

At the beginning of the 21st century, diplomacy in the context of world politics can be characterized in two ways. Firstly, diplomacy has become actually global, transcending the East-West ideological divisions that previously excluded many states from classical diplomatic relations during the Cold War. In that period, developing countries garnered the attention of major powers only as they could be aligned with one of them, while issues such as poverty and development were effectively sidelined from the diplomatic agenda. However, following the end of the Cold War, the concerns of

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development diplomacy have gained significant prominence within the broader framework of multilateral diplomacy.

Secondly, contemporary diplomacy is marked by its complexity and fragmentation. The analytical categories employed in research on multilateral diplomacy refers to the emergence of multiple actors engaged in complex, multilateral processes that often intersect with bilateral dimension. In essence, multilateral diplomacy now addresses a broader and more diverse agenda than ever before. Moreover, modern multilateral diplomacy demands the strengthening of the capacities of all stakeholders involved in monitoring and evaluating outcomes. This necessity stems not only from the increasing complexity and diversity of multilateral negotiations, encompassing a wide array of issues, but also from transformative shifts in the interconnectedness and interdependence of societies in today's international landscape, redefining diplomacy both as a process and a tool.

A comprehensive analysis of democratic processes at global and regional levels, as well as democratic reforms of states, cannot overlook the dimension of multilateralism. Multilateral cooperation and partnerships among international organizations are grounded in a shared commitment to a coherent approach that aligns domestic policies with the integration and support of democratic values in developing countries. Thus, building on the premise that democracy represents a global aspiration and that multilateral diplomacy functions as a mechanism for advancing democratic reforms and achieving development objectives, this study examines the conceptual and methodological perspectives regarding multilateral diplomacy as a promoter of democracy and good governance.

Conceptual framework

The concept of multilateral diplomacy, while emerging predominantly in the latter half of the 20th century and early 21st century, has historical roots that should not be overlooked. Certain foundational elements and forms of multilateral diplomacy can be traced back to antiquity, evolving alongside the progressively global character of international relations. Studies in political thought emphasize that the Amphictyonic Council served as an early mechanism for mediating conflicts among Greek city-states. Scholars note that efforts to address political, territorial, and economic conflicts, which have challenged European nations since antiquity, significantly contributed to the development of the ideal of European unity. The Peace of Westphalia is regarded as one of the earliest European diplomatic assemblies to establish the principles of political balance and paved the way for a new international order based on respect for state sovereignty. Following the Westphalian system, the emerging multilateral diplomacy gradually developed through international conferences convened in the aftermath of wars.

The principle of balance has always been interpreted in both a dynamic sense, wherein restoring a disrupted balance of power necessitated the convening of multilateral diplomatic forums aimed at negotiating means of achieving equilibrium, and a static dimension, wherein the focus shifts to the maintenance of balance. The latter typically held a military-political character. Addressing an existing or potential threat from a state or group of states was a direct task of various forms of multilateral diplomacy. The Yalta-Potsdam system led to the creation of the United Nations, recognized as an achievement in global inter-state relations and an effective mechanism for managing international relations. As the primary and universal mechanism of modern multilateral diplomacy,

UN operates alongside other international organizations, which, in close alignment with its founding principles, facilitate multilateral meetings, global and regional conferences, and other collective diplomatic events today.

The distinction between bilateral and multilateral diplomacy emerged with the establishment of the United Nations and its first decade. The term "multilateral diplomacy" is often defined in contrast to bilateral diplomacy, drawing an analogy between the two. Scholars highlight two key aspects of multilateral diplomacy. First, it involves actions carried out by multiple participants or actors within conferences, negotiations, or multilateral forums and structures. Second, it refers to a state's efforts to advance its interests within international organizations, conferences, and multilateral negotiations, a dimension often referred to as a state's multilateral diplomacy.

The emergence of new and influential actors on the international stage - international organizations - has intensified the phenomenon of interconnectedness and interdependence across various domains. I.M. Anghel et al., argue that international collaboration aimed at the fair and equitable resolution of problems remains an imperative without alternative. The authors explore the role of contemporary diplomatic relations as part of a state's broader foreign policy framework. They emphasize that, given the expansion of multilateral diplomacy through international conferences and organizations, no state can afford to ignore multilateral forums, where vital decisions affecting their own interests are made. Similarly, no state can afford to remain outside the United Nations or neglect collaboration with at least one of its specialized institutions. States that act otherwise isolate themselves, as cannot function outside the international community (Anghel et al, 2015).

M. Hardy in *Modern Diplomatic Law* referred to "a new diplomacy" that became multilateral in form and collective in aspirations. This type of diplomacy is based on a series of agreements that confer a largely independent status to the international organization (Hardy, 1986). According to V. Israelian, multilateral diplomacy involves the collaborative examination of an international issue of common interest by multiple states, aiming to find a mutually acceptable solution through joint efforts (Israelian, 1990). In the *Dictionary of Diplomacy*, authors G.R. Berridge and A. James define multilateral diplomacy as diplomacy conducted through conferences, emphasizing interstate cooperation and distinguishing it from bilateral diplomacy. (Berridge and James, 2003). N. Scott argues that multilateral diplomacy requires the full independence of states and a diversity of opinions as essential conditions (Scott, 2001). Similarly, V. Popov notes that modern diplomacy is often characterized by conference or multilateral diplomacy, emphasizing the need for the participation of most or all states in addressing global challenges (Popov, 2010).

The international conferences are traditional framework for multilateral diplomacy, facilitating consensus-building, peaceful resolution of external relations between subjects of international law, serving as a source of legitimacy. The conferences' documents can be treaties, declarations, resolutions, recommendations, etc. In this regard, the specific role of multilateral diplomacy is to represent the international community, bring competing issues to discussions, and engage in international political processes. The dissemination of knowledge, early warning of global issues, and monitoring are interconnected elements of the international agenda, stemming from the functions of multilateral diplomacy. These functions include informing public opinion, influencing policies at both the global and local levels, and integrating social and economic strategies across international and local spheres. It is important to note that declarations and action

plans adopted at multilateral conferences are more projections than practical programs with immediate and tangible applications. However, their recommendations have a significant impact, contributing to the adaptation of priorities, the reformulation of policies, and the establishment of departments and specialized structures within states entities and international organizations.

As the international development agenda has expanded, diplomacy has evolved to meet the need for alignment with modern realities, introducing new forms of coordinated responses and enabling the participation of emerging actors. These conditions led alongside the diversification of alternative concepts, to the multiplication of means of action. In the specialized literature, the term “multilateral diplomacy” is the broadest concept used to explain diplomatic practice within the multilateral system. In this context, it is important to note that terms like parliamentary diplomacy, collective diplomacy, summit diplomacy, and regional diplomacy are commonly used to define multilateral diplomacy. Similarly, Mario Damen, in his detailed analysis *Multilateralism and Democracy: A European Parliament Perspective*, points out that that together, all types of multilateral meetings and cooperation formats are currently referred to as multilateralism (Damen, 2022).

Multilateralism is generally considered to include certain qualitative elements or principles that shape the character of an agreement or institution. These principles relate to an indivisibility of interests among participants, a commitment to diffuse reciprocity, and a dispute resolution system designed to impose a certain mode of behavior (Scott, 2015). In other words, participating countries will act as a group with common interests, prepared to relinquish own advantages in pursuit of compromises that will be later enforced.

According to R. Cox (1992) and O. Fernández (2013), the evolution of the historical structure of international society could be characterized by *coexistence, cooperation, and solidarity*. Therefore, the evolution of multilateral diplomacy must be understood in relation to the transformations of international society, the structure of power, the nature of the State, the relationship between state and society, and the prevailing values. All formats the multilateral diplomacy has adopted constitute a distinct type of international society, with each phase characterized by the accumulation of a successive layer of rules.

Literature Review

Multilateral diplomacy functions as an essential mechanism for promoting effective collaboration. Over time, it has evolved as a fundamental organizing principle of the global order, grounded in the core idea of multilateralism and driven by the rising demand for enhanced cooperation in contemporary international relations. In their studies, authors J. Kaufmann (1996), P. Muldoon (2005), P. Kerr and G. Wiseman (2012), P. Sharp (2019) argue that modern diplomacy is defined by its adaptability, diversity, and its evolving role in addressing the complexities of the 21st century. Factors such as interdependence, globalization, regionalization, use of force, and potential shifts in global power dynamics underscore the necessity of multilateral diplomacy, positioning it as the most effective means of resolving disputes between political entities, whether state or non-state actors. According to James Der Derian (1991), the continuous evolution of diplomatic practices challenges the concept that diplomacy has reached or is close to achieving its ideal form.

Scholars R.O. Keohane (1990), R. Cox (1992), J.G. Ruggie (1993), R. Cohen (1999), J.A. Caporaso (2009), who conceptualized the multilateralism, assert there seems little doubt that multilateral norms and institutions have helped to stabilizing the most significant geopolitical shift of the postwar era, and perhaps of the entire twentieth century, in terms of international consequences. Indeed, these norms and institutions appear to play a significant role in the management of a broad array of regional and global changes in the world system today.

International factors have, until recently, been little incorporated into statistical models evaluating the prospects for democratization. These factors have generally been treated as secondary or auxiliary variables rather than as central components of research on democracy promotion. Nonetheless, as Geddes (2013:12) observes, many scholars suggest that international forces, such as the dissemination of democratic values and pressures from international institutions, may have a much more substantive impact on democratic transitions than has been identified so far, especially when it comes to the democratization processes that have occurred since the 1980s.

The analysis of the role of international institutions in democratization processes of states raises a fundamental question in the theoretical discourse on international relations: to what extent do these institutions shape state behavior on issues in the international agenda? This remains a central debate in the theoretical development of international relations. For instance, Stephen Krasner provides a definition of international regimes and explores the theoretical perspectives that examine their influence in international politics. He conceptualizes regimes as sets of implicit or explicit principles, norms, rules, and decision-making procedures around which actors' expectations align within a specific domain of international relations. In *Democracy-Enhancing Multilateralism*, R.O. Keohane et al. (2009), argue that participation in multilateral institutions—broadly defined to include international organizations, regimes, and networks governed by formal international agreements—can improve the quality of domestic democracy.

Scholars studying the impact of international organizations (IOs) on domestic democratization processes highlight that states undergoing democratic transitions have a strong incentive to join IOs. Membership in these organizations serves as a credible signal to both domestic and international audiences, demonstrating the commitment to political reform (Mansfield, Pevehouse, 2006:162). Empirical evidence suggests that democratizing states are more likely to join IOs than other countries and tend to affiliate with organizations predominantly composed of democracies, forming what the authors describe as "clubs of democracies." The argument that international institutions impact the processes of domestic democratization has also been expanded to other dimensions. Greenhill (2010) underline the capacity for democratic socialization associated with IOs, noting that they have "a surprisingly powerful influence" not only on democracy promotion, but on the diffusion of human rights norms.

In regional integration processes, supranational and intergovernmental international institutions have become key platforms for the exchange of knowledge, ideas, proposals, and policies that can influence decision-making within national states (Stone, 1999). Held (2004: 366-367) observed that the growing complexity of issues, coupled with increased interaction and interconnection between states and societies, has led to the expansion of the competencies of global and regional institutions, necessitating new international regulatory frameworks. According to Held, these frameworks involve multiple actors, diverse political processes, and various levels of coordination, with civil

society organizations engaging with local and national governments as well as international institutions.

The research of Whitehead (2020), Schmitter (2010), Burnell (2008) emphasize the pivotal role of multilateral diplomacy in advancing good governance as a key attribute of democracy, highlighting its correlation with global solidarity and partnership. The catalytic role of multilateral diplomacy is intrinsically linked to the essence of universal values, which good governance seeks to embody at both national and global levels.

In the Republic of Moldova, scholars extensively studied multilateral diplomacy, focusing on aspects such as socio-political transformations in the post-communist space influenced by global, regional, and local factors (Saca, Rusnac, 2017); role of international dimensions on the country democratic transition (Vasilescu, Grosu, 2009) and its socio-political modernization within a broader framework of European integration (Modernizarea social-politică a Republicii Moldova în contextul extinderii procesului integraționist european, 2019). Studies underline the active participation of the Republic of Moldova in multilateral cooperation through membership in international governmental organizations, reflecting a wide range of objectives, including its recognition as an independent state and subject of international law, as well as fostering the development of specific sectors aligned with the structural and functional characteristics of the institutions to which it belongs (Juc, Cojocaru, 2015).

Theoretical and methodological perspectives

The functionalist theory of integration, associated with K. Deutsch and D. Mitrany (Pfaltzgraff, 2020; Navari, 1995), emphasizes the cooperation according to technical needs of complex societies over political considerations. This perspective supports the creation of international organizations focused on scientific, humanitarian, social, and economic issues, among others. Mitrany characterizes this approach as pragmatic functionalism, emphasizing its role on encouraging the emergence of numerous functionally specialized international organizations, such as the specialized agencies of the United Nations. The neofunctionalist theory asserts that economic integration serves as a catalyst for political integration. E. Haas (2004) conducted the first systematic analysis of based on the logic underpinning regional integration. The neofunctionalist approach played a dominant role in the creation of the European Economic Community (EEC) and the European Atomic Energy Community (EURATOM).

The contemporary evolution of functionalism and neofunctionalism is represented by neoliberal institutionalism. The theory of complex interdependence, initially formulated by R. Keohane and J. Nye (2012), is built on several key arguments: (a) the increase in interdependence generates cooperation at global and regional levels, thereby strengthening international institutions; (b) international organizations play a crucial role by exerting direct or indirect influence on state policies and shaping how states define their interests; (c) as multilateral platforms, they facilitate information sharing, promote transparency, monitor and evaluate converging expectations, and enhance the efficiency of strategies.

The theory of democratic peace, a significant strand of liberal thought that emerged in the 1990s and continues to influence contemporary policies, emphasizes the importance of global democratization. Adopted by Western powers and international organizations, the approach highlights principles such as open diplomacy, the promotion of peace through the expansion of democratic institutions, adherence to the rule of law,

and the belief that an international system of democratic states can eliminate conflict and war.

J. Wolff and I. Wurm (2011) argue that the concept of “antinomies” related to democratic peace and contextual causal mechanisms provides compelling reasons for applying democratic peace studies to investigate the potential motives behind democracy promotion. M.G. Hermann and C.W. Kegley Jr. (1995) highlight that the democratic peace hypothesis is often regarded in the literature as the closest approximation to an “iron law” in international relations theory. However, Schraeder (2002) notes that this hypothesis holds primarily in the case of coercive forms of intervention. When it comes to direct military intervention by one democracy against another, the empirical robustness of the hypothesis diminishes as one moves down the spectrum of tools available to democratic states.

Academic research has increasingly aligned with the expansion of foreign and development policies explicitly aimed at the international promotion and protection of democratic regimes. However, a largely underexplored area remains the theoretical understanding of ‘democracy promotion’ as both a goal and a strategy within democratic foreign policies. In other words, there is a need to situate empirical research on democracy promotion within theoretical frameworks of international relations. Hazel Smith (2000: 1) argues that “international democratic theory,” in terms of explaining and understanding the interrelationship between democracy, democratization, and the international system, remains absent. More specifically, Burnell and Calvert (2005: 436) contend that “a closely informed analysis of what could be called the ‘high politics’ of international democracy promotion seems to have lagged behind,” referencing, among other things, the “role of democracy promotion in the foreign-policy processes of Western governments” (Youngs, 2006: 8–9).

Despite this gap, there have been explicit efforts to theorize democracy promotion. Studies addressing democracy promotion as one of several international dimensions of democratization often focus on ‘recipient’ countries, specifically examining the impact of democracy-promotion policies. These studies draw on theories of democratic transition and consolidation to conceptualize the various causal mechanisms through which external actors influence domestic political change. Scholars in international relations who have systematically analyzed democracy promotion tend to share this emphasis on impact and causal mechanisms. As such, within the discipline of international relations, democracy promotion is predominantly analyzed through the paradigms of ‘compliance’ and ‘international socialization’ (Cowles et al., 2001; Schimmelfennig et al., 2006). Again, theoretical attention is given to the mechanisms by which democracy-promotion policies affect domestic political change. Studies comparing democracy-promotion strategies rely on an ‘analytical framework’ that centers entirely on these mechanisms—the ‘logics,’ ‘targets,’ and ‘pathways’ of influence—rather than offering a theoretical explanation that might predict, explain, or help understand the variances and commonalities of strategies across time and place. Research on the actors involved in external democracy promotion policies largely remains descriptive, and even when causal claims are made, they are often presented without a clear theoretical framework.

Based on democratization theories, external assistance can contribute to democratization processes indirectly through development aid aimed at improving socio-economic conditions. In contrast, targeted democracy assistance instruments are designed to empower domestic actors such as civil society and democratic institutions.

Additionally, democracy assistance can facilitate democratic reforms by easing the financial constraints faced by recipients and providing them with the necessary tools and resources to implement democratic reforms (Gafuri, 2022). It is this direct investment mechanism that makes democracy assistance likely to impact democratic institutions. The effectiveness of democracy assistance may be further increased when donors combine it with additional tools. As a key donor, the European Union utilizes a range of mechanisms to strengthen democracy in recipient countries.

Democracy lies at the core of the European Union's internal and external policies. Although the EU's democracy promotion is a multifaceted approach, scholars typically describe it through models of leverage, linkage, and governance. In practice, the EU not only provides financial aid but also engages extensively through parallel projects, assistance packages, monitoring bodies, and conditionality measures, all designed to incentivize recipient countries to pursue democratic reforms. The EU employs a broad spectrum of instruments and political conditionality mechanisms, and it has one of the largest networks of foreign delegation offices among Western donors (Lavenex S., Schimmelfennig F. 2011). Based on the literature review, key mechanisms of multilateral diplomacy, such as the political conditionality and the offering of incentives, are essential in driving the success of democracy assistance-led reforms.

This framework operates on the assumption of "the logic of consequences," which posits that states are rational actors that assess costs and benefits in their bilateral interactions. Empirical evidence suggests that when international organizations such as the EU, the World Bank, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), and the Council of Europe offer incentives—such as membership in organizations, trade agreements, closer institutional ties, economic cooperation, military protection, and financial aid—recipient states are more inclined to implement democratic reforms (Dimitrova A., Pridham G. 2004). These donors differ in their approaches, strategies, incentives and thus their effectiveness in encouraging democracy abroad. The European Union differs from other donors through its more vigorous use of the accession conditionality instrument, the implementation of robust gatekeeping mechanisms, and the provision of substantial tangible incentives.

Multilateral diplomacy: support for democracy and good governance

In academic literature, the investigated subject is framed in the hypotheses on general models of democracy promotion. Analysis of the interaction between how decision-makers define national interest and their perceptions of a "democratic environment" has highlighted key considerations as critical "starting points" in the democratic transitions of developing countries. Prioritizing security interests and ensuring both domestic and international stability has fostered an approach that emphasizes political liberalization. This perspective includes promoting regularized political processes, such as free and fair elections, and fostering the development of robust state institutions, particularly in the legislative and judicial sectors. An emphasis on economic interests, including the pursuit of national economic growth and a thriving global economic system, has advanced a model that aligns democratic promotion with economic liberalization. Advocates of this approach argue that fostering democracy should prioritize good governance, which inherently supports political liberalization. Furthermore, an ideological focus on humanitarian concerns, such as the protection of human rights, has inspired a democratization strategy centered on social liberalization. This approach has traditionally prioritized strengthening civil society while incorporating

social welfare initiatives aimed at mitigating socio-economic disparities, thereby positioning them as fundamental to democratic promotion.

A key component of democratization has become the active involvement of a broad range of intergovernmental organizations. The United Nations has progressively sought to codify democratic values and expand opportunities for democratic governance worldwide. Consequently, international law has gradually transformed in favor of recognizing democracy as a "right" that must be defended and promoted (Franck, 1992).

The discourse on good governance in international relations, as articulated by J. Rosenau, begins with the concept of "governance" and refers to the use of political authority and the exercise of control in relation to managing resources for economic and social development. The theorist directly links the concept to the context of the UN system, associating it with "order, stability, and monitoring" (Rosenau, 1995).

Generally, the notion of *good governance* is extensively analyzed in the literature, although, a comprehensive definition or delineation of its objectives that would constitute a universal acceptance is elusive. For example, early research and expert studies on development policies initially supported a narrow understanding, limited to the efficient functioning of the state, strictly associated with management, administrative performance, and the regulatory framework of the state, based on principles such as: effectiveness, predictability, transparency, accountability, combating corruption, or efficient financial management (Andrews, 2013); while in the field of democratization, many scholars and practitioners refer to a more expansive meaning (Robinson, Hout, 2015). Depending on the context and purpose, good governance involves respecting human rights, ensuring the rule of law, participation, partnership, legitimacy, access to knowledge, guaranteeing information and education, equity, sustainable development, and accountability. There is, however, significant consensus that the concept can be analyzed through three dimensions: technical, social, and political (Şaptefraţi, 2015).

The International Monetary Fund and the World Bank were the first international organizations to incorporate the discourse on good governance within the framework of structural adjustment policies during the 1980s. Initially, the World Bank adhered to a relatively apolitical notion of the concept, as it was not tasked with exerting pressure for democratic reforms in the target countries for its cooperation programs, but rather aimed to improve public administration efficiency in "undemocratic circumstances" (Smouts, 1998). Gradually, the World Bank has attributed a more political dimension to the concept, emphasizing the improvement of policymaking processes and the protection of constitutionally enshrined rights. This shift has blurred the distinction between support for good governance and the promotion of democracy. Currently, the quality of governance is assessed using the World Bank's Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI), which are derived from a variety of sources to evaluate governance quality across six dimensions: voice and accountability, political stability and absence of violence/terrorism, government effectiveness, regulatory quality, rule of law, and control of corruption.

The legal instruments of the United Nations (the Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights) serve as fundamental pillars for all international organizations committed to promoting democracy. At the same time, the UN has never sought to export or promote any specific national or regional model of democracy.

Given the major changes on the international stage and the aspirations of peoples for an international order based on the principles enshrined in the UN Charter, the organization has adopted several important documents defining peace, democracy, justice, the rule of law, pluralism, development, welfare, and solidarity. In 1996, through the position paper *An Agenda for Democratization*, UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali stated that Democratization is a process leading to a more open and participatory society; it requires a comprehensive approach that aims not only at organizing free and fair elections, but also at building a democratic political culture; it must aim to strike a balance between state institutions and civil society institutions. Within states, democratization must be supported by a process of democratization between the state and the entire international system. An essential role in establishing a coherent and comprehensive strategic approach to the United Nations' commitment to promoting democratic reforms was played by three guidance notes issued in 2008 and 2009: *The United Nations Approach to Rule of Law Assistance*, *United Nations Assistance in Constitution-Making Processes*, and *Democracy*.

According to the UN system, good governance refers to political and institutional processes and outcomes that ensure the achievement of development objectives. The true test of "good" governance lies in the extent to which it fulfills its promise regarding human rights: civil, cultural, economic, political, and social rights. At the 2012 "Rio+20" conference, based on the Millennium Development Goals, were decided at the global level the Sustainable Development Goals. Adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development offers a comprehensive framework for fostering peace and prosperity for both people and the planet, addressing present needs while ensuring sustainability for future generations. At the core of this agenda are the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which constitute an urgent appeal for collective action by all countries - both developed and developing - through a global partnership. Along with natural resources, sustainable consumption and production now it includes justice, strong institutions; sustainable and inclusive economic growth; inclusive and equitable social development.

The United Nations has established a network of governance programs worldwide, particularly in developing countries. These programs are managed by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), which acts as the primary agency for supporting the achievement of the 2030 Agenda. While the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are globally adopted, they are customized to the specific context of each country with UN support (nationalized). The targets of the SDGs are aligned with national policy priorities and government reform agendas.

Moreover, important resolutions were adopted, including A/RES/54/36, Support for the efforts of governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies, through which the UN General Assembly recognizes the organization's significant role in providing adequate and coherent support to governments in their efforts to achieve development and democratization goals. Resolution A/HRC/RES/19/36, Human Rights, Democracy, and the Rule of Law, reaffirms the link between democracy and the rule of law and reiterates the intrinsic connection between promoting democracy and respecting human rights, the importance of social cohesion in democratization processes, and the involvement of subregional, regional, and international organizations in promoting the rule of law and building a democratic society.

In the European Union's view, democratic structures are seen as key components of good governance (Hackenesch, 2016). For many years, the trend was to suggest

through its foreign policy documents that good governance and democracy go hand in hand. Thus, in accordance with the concept of good governance influenced by development policy, the EU can support governance reforms by promoting transparent decision-making processes, fighting corruption, strengthening public financial management, reforms in public and administrative services; it supports reforms to strengthen governmental institutional capacities to improve administration. In line with the definition of the concept involving political aspects derived from democratization, the EU emphasizes a stronger normative dimension regarding the respect for human rights and democracy (Santiso, 2003). In this sense, the EU can support democratic reforms by promoting competitive democratic policies, political and civil rights, the rule of law, and both horizontal and vertical accountability.

The European Union, through Article 21 of the Treaty on European Union, stipulates that the EU's actions on the international stage are guided by the principles that have inspired its own creation, development, and expansion: the promotion of democracy and the rule of law, the protection of fundamental human rights and freedoms, and the respect for the principles of the UN Charter and international law.

The Neighborhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI) – Global Europe encompasses a thematic pillar focused on human rights and democracy, civil society organizations, stability and peace, as well as global challenges through programs with global reach. This financial instrument is structured around three main pillars. In addition to the aforementioned pillar, it includes a geographical pillar, which covers programs for countries in the European neighborhood (Eastern and Southern), Sub-Saharan Africa, Asia and the Pacific, the Americas, and the Caribbean. These programs concentrate on areas of cooperation such as good governance, poverty eradication, migration, the environment and climate change, economic growth and employment, security and peace, among other cross-cutting issues. The rapid response pillar aims to align humanitarian efforts with development goals, enhance the resilience of countries affected by crises, or address priorities in foreign policy. NDICI – Global Europe streamlines the EU's external financing architecture by merging previous programs, including the Development Cooperation Instrument, the European Neighborhood Instrument, the Partnership Instrument, the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights, the European Development Fund, and the European Peace Instrument.

The Council of Europe promotes *democratic good governance* by supporting democratic reforms aimed at the judicial system and specialized anti-corruption institutions, gender equality, freedom and media pluralism, information security, prison and probation system reform, electoral system reform, education for human rights, and democratic citizenship. The evaluation criteria adopted by the Council of Europe are based on 12 principles: free and fair elections; responsiveness; effectiveness; openness and transparency; respect for the rule of law; ethical conduct; competence and capacity; sustainability; good financial management; human rights, cultural diversity, and social cohesion; and accountability.

Although levels of democracy cannot easily be compared between states and are complex to assess, there are ways to evaluate the quality of democracy in a state at a given time. The intergovernmental organization International IDEA, which works to support and strengthen democratic institutions and processes worldwide, has developed the "State of Democracy" evaluation framework. According to this framework, two fundamental principles of democracy are essential: 1) popular control over decisions and

decision-makers; 2) equal respect and voice among citizens in exercising that control. The realization of these two principles is possible through seven values: participation, authorization, representation, accountability, transparency, responsiveness, and solidarity. Additionally, it proposes the following explanations. Strengthening democracy refers to creating the conditions necessary for the implementation of democratic principles. To be effective, these efforts must be driven from within a country, though they can also be supported externally. Democracy does not develop in a vacuum: international relations and the actions of external actors can affect national and local realities, influencing the maturity of democratic institutions and society. Democratization is a long-term, essentially endless process aimed at strengthening democratic culture, institutional capacities, and implementing democratic reforms. At the same time, the international community uses the concept of democratization to describe actions that provide assistance and supporting countries moving toward a "dynamic state" of democracy.

In commonly accepted conceptualization, external assistance refers to the voluntary transfer of resources—such as goods, expertise (including technologies, methodologies, and techniques), as well as grants and loans—from a donor to a recipient country. This transfer is intended to support the recipient's socio-economic development, promote democracy, and strengthen the rule of law.

In the legislative context of the Republic of Moldova, external assistance is defined as "external financial and technical assistance received by the Republic of Moldova from international organizations and donor countries to address critical situations, support socio-economic development, and foster the democratization of society."

While the official term used is Official Development Assistance (ODA), the literature also employs terms like democracy assistance and assistance for democratic development. The delineation of terminology in development assistance remains a relevant subject of study. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), which coordinates the aid policies of its member states for developing countries, addresses this issue with particular focus. Likewise, the UN, IMF, World Bank, EU, and other multilateral organizations are actively engaged in clarifying the conceptual framework of external development assistance.

Referring to the advantage of external assistance provided by multilateral donors, as compared to bilateral support, is that the funds pooled by multilateral organizations enable the implementation of large-scale programs and facilitate coordination among donors at both regional and global levels.

Conclusions

The concept of multilateral diplomacy remains central within international relations theory, yet it continues to be difficult to understand and relatively underexplored, due to its inherently multifaceted nature. As the international system has evolved, diplomacy has adapted by embracing new forms of coordinated action, facilitating the involvement of diverse actors and introducing new methods of engagement. A review of definitions highlights that multilateral diplomacy pertains to modern diplomatic practices, international negotiations, and multilateral cooperation frameworks. In contemporary understanding, the concept refers to diplomacy through conferences, international organizations, and multilateralism. Terms such as parliamentary diplomacy, collective diplomacy, summit diplomacy, and regional

diplomacy are used to describe different facets of multilateral diplomacy. According to international law doctrine, multilateral diplomacy encompasses diplomatic practices and methods applied by international organizations. The post-Cold War transformation of the international system significantly increased the role of international organizations in global politics, marking a pivotal moment in their recognition as primary actors in promoting democratic norms.

The concept of multilateral diplomacy as a promoter of democracy and good governance involves facilitating direct cooperation with emerging actors and states in regions where, under different circumstances, a country's diplomacy may have limited impact or be absent. It also entails coordinating initiatives based on thematic frameworks endorsed by the international community, such as good governance and sustainable development. Additionally, multilateral diplomacy expands the agenda to encompass dimensions that allow states to cultivate horizontal niches, such as democracy and democratization, reconstruction, and the responsibility to protect. Furthermore, it provides multilateral platforms for advancing initiatives at the global, regional, and local levels.

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