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(rev.) Thomas Carothers, *Confronting the Weakest Link. Aiding Political Parties in New Democracies*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Washington, D.C. 2006, pp. 271

While political parties are regarded as a key component of democratic regimes, they are also seen as particularly inept at performing the functions typically ascribed to them. In his book, *Confronting the Weakest Link*, Thomas Carothers sees this problem particularly acutely and analyses the role of international aid to political parties in emerging democracies. He introduces the reader to the often overlooked world of aid to political parties within the wider framework of democratization and support for democracy. Carothers' work constitutes the first detailed analysis of international support provided specifically to political parties by various multilateral organizations and party foundations. Carothers combines his practical experience as a long-standing advisor on political parties' development in different regions of the world with thorough academic research. At the same time, he keeps the necessary distance in his analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of aid to political parties. The author, looking through the lenses of political science and of the strategies underlying various organizations' assistance to parties, seeks to explain the failure of party aid.

The book is comprised of nine chapters, which are arranged around two key issues: the problems facing newly-established political parties and the impact of political party aid on their development. Carothers poses a vital question to all persons and organizations involved in party assistance activities: why have the efforts of Western aid providers had such a limited effect on political parties in new and emerging democracies? He adopts an analytical approach to the subject and applies his theoretical findings and explanations to the selected cases of new democracies. He analyses countries from a variety of regions, focusing mainly on Guatemala, Indonesia, Morocco, Mozambique, Romania and Russia as representative of their respective regions.

Carothers starts by providing a comprehensive diagnosis of the current state of young democracies, and in particular their political parties. He analyses the nature of the crisis that young democracies and their political parties are experiencing. To provide a detailed background for his analysis, he tours the reader around Central and Eastern

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