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State-civil society relations in Syria : EU good governance assistance in an authoritarian state

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Propositions

1. *The civil society does not exist.*
2. Democracy promoters should take account of traditional civil society as a possible factor of political influence.
3. Promoting democracy without effective guarantees based on mutual respect for the freedom of expression by citizens of their religious, ethnic or secular identities, is a recipe for conflict.
4. Donor assistance for democratic governance as part of development cooperation is in the case of authoritarian regimes an ineffective and obscure strategy.
5. The Liberal discourse of civil society as a pro-democracy force diverts attention from structural factors in state society relations contributing to authoritarianism.
6. The principle of ownership in development strategies by partner countries is an effective tool for authoritarian regimes to undermine donor promotion of democratic governance.
7. The development of a market economy is not in itself a sufficient condition for the growth of a vibrant civil society, nor for democratization.
8. As long as Syrians have no consensus about the Syrian national identity, a peaceful transition to a democratic political system seems unrealistic.
9. An authoritarian state can allow civil society to play a constructive role in socio-economic development but not in the promotion of transparency and accountability of public bodies at all levels, because the latter would undermine its power.
10. Strengthening the capacity of organisations which are part of the state corporatist system will not by itself lead to an increase in the accountability and transparency of government.
11. Allowing civil society to play a larger role, but without providing it the means to express itself politically, is unlikely to stem the growth of opposition, including militant Islamic movements. (Moubayed, 2006: 6.)
12. In order to bring about democratic change, it is more effective to invest in dialogue than to invest in arms.
13. The more the violence grows, the more the civilian scope is 'sucked up' by extreme solutions, while it is necessary to give it breathing space again and a voice to civil society (Father Paolo Dall'Oglio, 2012: Without a page number.)
14. The risk with political commentators as well as with policy makers is that they observe what they want to see.
15. In the social reality the truth has many faces.