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# THE ROLE OF DEMOCRACY IN THE SELECTION OF AID RECIPIENTS

A Case Study Investigating the Decision-Making  
Process of the Swedish International Development  
Cooperation Agency (Sida)

**Ismail Bazine**

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# Abstract

This thesis aims to explore how the level of democracy in recipient countries affects the decision-making process of the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) when determining whether to provide aid to state or non-state actors. While existing research has predominantly focused on donor motivations and interests based on aid allocation patterns, little attention has been given to the selection process employed by donor agencies and the factors that guide this process. This study seeks to address these research gaps by adopting a mixed-methods approach within a case study research design. The analysis incorporates secondary quantitative data, such as trends in aid allocation, trade relationships, democracy levels, and government quality of recipient countries. Additionally, primary data is collected through semi-structured interviews with current or former high-level officials from Sida, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, and the Expert Group for Aid Studies (EBA).

Interestingly, the research findings suggest that the decline in democracy levels in recipient countries has a more significant impact on Sida's selection process than the absolute level of democracy. Although democracy levels are considered, they primarily serve as a justification for employing bypass tactics, particularly among left-leaning parties with a normative approach centered on democratic values. This emphasis on declining democracy is driven by Sweden's commitment to maintaining bilateral cooperation with state actors in countries with stable democracies, aligning with the principles of country ownership outlined in the Paris Declaration of Aid Effectiveness. Both the Swedish government and Sida are fully aware of the risks associated with aid capture, prompting them to employ bypass tactics and refrain from engaging in state-to-state cooperation in countries where democracy is deteriorating, and the risk of aid capture is perceived to be higher.

**Keywords:** *Sida, Development Aid, Decision-Making Process, Selection of Aid Recipients, State Actors, Non-State Actors, Democracy*

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# 1. Introduction

Over the past decades, development aid has been a crucial tool in the global effort to reduce poverty and promote development in low-income countries. The motivations for providing aid have been diverse, ranging from humanitarian to strategic and political considerations (Andrews, 2015). Some donor countries, such as Sweden, Denmark, the Netherlands, and Norway, have been commended for their non-political and impartial aid programs, which prioritize sustainable development and democratic values in recipient countries (Dreher, Mölders & Nunnenkamp, 2010; Sida, 2021). However, while development aid has the potential to catalyze positive change, it is not without its challenges.

One key challenge in providing development aid is deciding on the appropriate recipient of aid, whether it be state actors, such as government entities, or non-state actors in the recipient country, including civil society organizations (CSOs), community groups, and private sector entities. For instance, government-to-government development aid, which involves the recipient government, can foster country ownership and long-term sustainability, but it can also be costly and vulnerable to corruption and bureaucratic inefficiencies. On the other hand, bypassing state actors and delivering development aid directly to the people can help to avoid recipient structures and utilize local expertise, but it can also divert attention from transformational projects as well as affect politics in recipient countries by undermining confidence in elected leaders or causing repressive governments to lash out (Dietrich, 2021).

Furthermore, the provision of direct development aid to state institutions in non-democratic countries can raise controversy, as it may legitimize repressive regimes and supply them with resources that could be used to suppress their citizens. This concern is also echoed in the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency's (Sida) 2021 annual report, which for instance, highlights that the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region frequently lacks the necessary conditions for Sida to work with state institutions because of the presence of numerous repressive regimes with no intention of reform (Sida, 2022).

However, Sida's official documents do not explicitly state a democratic threshold at which funding to state actors would cease, presumably for diplomatic reasons and that decisions are made on a country-to-country basis. Similarly, Sida's long-term strategies for recipient countries do not mention any specific democratic threshold. However, some long-term strategies diplomatically acknowledge instances where the recipient country has experienced a decline in the development of democratic values (Government of Sweden, 2022). The cautious

documentation and limited transparency surrounding Sida's recipient selection process have faced previous criticism. For example, a report by the Swedish National Audit Office in 2022 highlighted the lack of clarity regarding how these selections are made (Swedish National Audit Office, 2022).

Furthermore, there has been limited scholarly attention given to the donor agencies' selection process for aid recipients, and even fewer studies have explored the considerations and motives guiding this selection process, especially when recipient countries experience a democratic regression. Previous research on development aid has primarily centered on aid allocations, employing comparative statistical analysis on multiple units of analysis to draw conclusions about donor motivations and interests based on aid allocation patterns. However, this approach may not be sufficient when dealing with abstract concepts such as donor considerations and motives.

It is particularly important considering the dual nature of supporting autocratic regimes through development aid. As can be drawn from previous research, failing to select appropriate aid recipients can have severe consequences that could potentially impede democratic progress in recipient countries (Dietrich, 2021). Therefore, one can argue that the selection process of aid recipients plays a crucial role in determining the developmental outcomes in international development cooperation.

This investigation holds critical importance as Sida has prioritized democracy promotion as a key objective (Sida, 2021). The thesis adds thus both academic and practical value by investigating the limited researched area of aid recipient selection process in international development cooperation and the role of democracy in the work of Sida's aid officials when dealing with autocratic regimes. The objective of this thesis is thus to fill these gaps and be theory-building by investigating how the Swedish government and Sida select aid recipients in countries receiving long-term development aid and how the level of democratic governance in those countries influences these decisions. Accordingly, this study aims to investigate this topic by answering the following research question:

*How does the level of democracy in recipient countries influence Sida's selection process when choosing between state and non-state aid recipient actors?*

To answer the research question and reach meaningful conclusions, this study employs a mixed-methods approach that combines qualitative and quantitative data in a case study research design. Secondary data is utilized to examine Sida's aid patterns and country strategies for selected recipient countries in which they have long-term development goals with.

Additionally, the study incorporates data on democracy and government quality in these countries, as well as Sweden's trade relationships with them, to provide contextual insights for interpreting the interview data. Primary data is collected through semi-structured interviews involving a diverse range of respondents, including current and former officials from Sida, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, and the Expert Group for Aid Studies (EBA). These interviews form the empirical core of the study, providing valuable insights into the subject matter. The data is then analyzed using a thematic analytical framework, facilitating the identification of recurring themes and patterns. Finally, the thesis concludes with a summary of findings and recommendations for future research.

## **1.2 Delimitations**

This thesis has certain research delimitations regarding its focus. It primarily centers on Sida, the Swedish government agency responsible for implementing Sweden's Official Development Assistance (ODA). Although other government actors such as the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and the Folke Bernadotte Academy (FBA) are also involved in Swedish development aid, they are not thoroughly included due to word restrictions. The thesis also prioritizes Sida's development aid over collective aid provided by multiple donors through multilateral organizations. This is because collective aid may be influenced by factors other than Sweden's policies and motivations. Additionally, the thesis focuses on Sida's long-term strategies and development aid rather than humanitarian aid, which is more likely driven by humanitarian principles and tends to be less politically charged. In contrast, development aid involves longer-term support aimed at reducing poverty and promoting democracy in recipient countries (Sida, 2021), which may lead to political controversies and dilemmas for Sweden as the donor government.



## 2. Previous Research

The current research field on aid allocation is dominated by researchers trying to answer the longstanding question as to why the allocation of foreign development aid does not seem to align with the governance quality of recipient countries. In other words, why do donors allocate aid to autocratic regimes? One common explanation is that donor motivations, such as political self-interest, take precedence over considerations of recipient merit. This notion has been supported by various pieces of evidence that suggest that donors may provide aid for a range of reasons. Some of these include maintaining relationships with former colonies (Rioux & Van Belle, 2005; Joly, 2014; Alesina & Dollar, 2000), influencing United Nations voting patterns or election outcomes (Adhikari, 2019; Dreher, Nunnenkamp & Tiele, 2008; Kuziemko & Werker, 2006; Alesina & Dollar, 2000; Faye & Niehaus, 2012), promoting pre-existing trade links with recipient nations (Berthélemy, 2006; Alesina & Dollar, 2000), responding to increased media attention on the circumstances in recipient countries (Rioux & Van Belle, 2005; Joly, 2014), or encouraging development as a means of minimizing the likelihood of problems occurring in the recipient country, as it could potentially have negative spillover effects on the donor country (Bermeo, 2017).

Numerous studies have also investigated aid allocation by focusing on different donor channels, such as aid delivered through government agencies, private organizations, and NGOs. These studies have provided valuable insights into the importance of well-defined poverty reduction strategies in aid allocation, the relative effectiveness of government agencies versus non-state donors, the potential for NGOs to outperform government agencies, and the significant variation across channels in aid distribution based on need and merit, with political motivations influencing the allocation process (Schulpen, 1997; Nunnenkamp, Weingarh, & Weisser, 2009; Nunnenkamp & Öhler, 2011).

Further insights into aid allocation come from studies on regional aid distribution, which suggest that donors do not necessarily prioritize aid to democratic countries, regions with the highest need for aid, or those that offer market access. Instead, donors often favor regional aid recipients that can effectively reduce transaction costs, broaden policy scope, engage more donor governments, maintain strong relationships with donors, or have strong colonial ties to the donor country (Stapel, Panke & Söderbaum, 2023; Maiden & Brockway, 2018).

This fragmented explanation of donor behavior raises an alternative viewpoint - the dilemma faced by donor governments when it comes to withdrawing aid from poorly governed

countries, which often have the greatest need for aid but also the weakest institutions. One potential solution to this dilemma is to deliver aid to non-state actors in the recipient country rather than directly to recipient governments. Although a considerable portion of aid from Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) donor countries is channeled to non-state actors, there are limited studies that examine this aid modality or the underlying reasons for this pattern (Acht, Omar Mahmoud & Thiele, 2014).

## **2.1 Previous Research on the Allocation of Aid to State or Non-State Actors**

Gaining a comprehensive understanding of the various ways in which donors behave and channel aid is crucial for making sense of prior studies on donor motives in selecting state or non-state actors as aid recipients. Previous research has often relied solely on aid commitments, leading to puzzling findings such as the observation that more corrupt countries receive greater amounts of foreign aid (Alesina & Weder, 2002).

This might lead some to draw the conclusion that donor governments are not concerned about the risks associated with providing aid to corrupt countries and are not prioritizing development outcomes. However, drawing such conclusions can be flawed as it fails to consider the diverse channels and recipients through which aid is implemented in recipient countries.

To gain a deeper understanding of donor behavior and aid allocation, it is crucial to explore the explanations provided by current research focusing on how different factors impact which aid recipients receive aid. Unlike the more general research on aid allocation presented above, most of the studies presented below delve into the channels and recipients of aid, providing insights that contribute to a more nuanced understanding of donor behavior and the factors that influence it.

The next section of this study is divided into three parts. Part one explores research on donor characteristics influencing aid recipient selection. Part two focuses on recipient characteristics in this decision-making process. These sections are followed by a discussion that highlights the research gap, research problem, and research contribution of this study.

### ***2.1.1 Donor Characteristics as Determinants of Foreign Aid Allocation***

Research has shown that donor characteristics, including political ideology, level of democracy, and global position, significantly impact the outcomes of foreign aid in terms of recipient selection. Previous studies have highlighted the importance of these characteristics, especially

in promoting democratization in recipient nations and determining whether to allocate aid to state or non-state actors (Bermeo, 2011; Dietrich & Murdie, 2017; Allen & Flynn, 2018; Dietrich, 2021).

Bermeo's (2011) research is a valuable addition to this literature, as it sheds light on the relationship between foreign aid and democratization. The study's findings indicate that the effect of aid on democracy is dependent on the characteristics of the donor country. Specifically, democratic donors usually use aid to foster democracy or reward countries that are making progress toward democracy. In contrast, authoritarian donors often offer aid to advance their political interests, which can ultimately impede democratization.

Moreover, Dietrich and Murdie's (2017) article examines how shaming recipient governments for human rights violations affects the delivery of foreign aid in OECD donor countries. The article proposes that when human rights international nongovernmental organizations, such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, criticize recipient countries, donor governments tend to avoid working with the recipient government and instead choose non-state aid delivery channels. However, the authors argue that this relationship depends on the donor country's position in the global system. Minor power countries, like Sweden, have less influence in international affairs and are more likely to take human rights shaming into account when making aid delivery decisions compared to major donor countries such as the US.

Furthermore, Allen and Flynn (2018) explored how the domestic politics of donor countries influence their foreign aid policies. The authors contended that the ideological position of donor governments is a critical factor in determining how aid is distributed to recipient countries. For instance, their research revealed that liberal governments often route aid through NGOs, whereas conservative governments prefer to provide aid directly to recipient governments. This contrast in aid delivery methods reflects the different objectives pursued by left and right-leaning political parties in their foreign aid programs. Left-leaning governments, as per the authors, prioritize poverty reduction, while right-leaning governments focus on advancing their constituents' economic interests and promoting their nation's geopolitical objectives (Allen & Flynn, 2018).

Dietrich's (2021) research focuses on the decision-making process at the level of aid officials. The study argues that national structures dictate the strategies of aid officials, restricting their options and affecting the tactics they choose for delivering aid and the goals they set. Dietrich (2021) distinguishes between two types of type of national structures:

neoliberal and traditional public sector logic. Aid donor governments with a neoliberal approach are more likely to use competitive contracting and focus on short-term outcomes, while those with a traditional approach are more inclined to prioritize long-term objectives. As a result, aid donor governments with a neoliberal orientation are more likely to bypass the recipient state and deliver aid through non-state actors, while those with a traditional orientation will continue to deliver aid directly through the recipient state even when faced with implementation risks (Dietrich, 2021).

Dietrich's (2021) research provides valuable insights into the experiences of aid officials in Sweden when dealing with poorly governed countries. The study highlights the significant importance Swedish aid officials place on engaging with the recipient government, even if it is corrupt, rather than relying solely on NGOs or international organizations. Sweden, as a leading donor country that underwent public sector restructuring towards neoliberalism in the 1990s, faces tensions with older beliefs about the significance of the state, a view shared by aid officials in other neoliberal and major OECD donor countries such as the UK and the US. Thus, British and American officials also emphasized the negative consequences of bypassing state actors, as it, for instance, may establish parallel structures in recipient countries.

### ***2.1.2 Recipient Characteristics as Determinants of Foreign Aid Allocation***

Previous research on foreign aid allocation has largely overlooked the significance of recipient characteristics in determining whether state or non-state actors will receive the aid. However, scholars have recently begun to examine how the quality of governance and institutions, along with other factors in the recipient country, influence foreign aid allocation to these actors (Acht et al., 2015; Dietrich, 2013).

Earlier studies, like Radelet's (2004), suggest that foreign aid is selectively allocated to countries with better governance, and aid delivery is restructured accordingly. According to Radelet (2004), well-governed countries should receive more program funding with longer-term commitments, greater involvement in designing aid programs, and support for a broader range of activities, with most of the funding channeled through the recipient government. On the other hand, poorly governed countries should receive less funding, with more of it in the form of project aid with shorter time commitments and a more focused approach to activities. Additionally, a significant portion of aid in these countries should be distributed through non-state actors (Radelet, 2004).

More recent studies within this research area support these recommendations. For example, Acht et al. (2015) found that donor countries use aid delivery channels to differentiate between recipient countries with good and poor governance when allocating foreign aid. In countries with poor governance, donors tend to bypass state institutions and deliver more aid through non-state actors, particularly in cases involving corruption and military expenditures. This finding contradicts the common belief in the aid allocation literature that recipient merit is not considered. Acht et al.'s (2015) estimates also confirm Alesina and Weder's (2002) finding that more corrupt countries receive higher amounts of total aid, however, showing that this aid is channeled through non-state actors rather than state actors.

Donors who bypass recipient governments are likely motivated by developmental concerns according to Acht et al. (2015), as political and economic self-interests could be pursued more easily through direct government-to-government contact. This interpretation of donor motives contributes to the debate on why donors channel aid through non-state actors and suggests that donors are not solely driven by self-interest. The rationale behind this is that bypassing at a significant scale is unlikely without donor altruism, as self-interest can be pursued more effectively through direct state-to-state interactions (Acht et al., 2015).

In a similar vein, Dietrich's (2013) 's research shows that, on average, donors opt for bypass tactics to deliver aid in countries such as Sudan or Sri Lanka, where aid is greatly needed but corruption or weak state institutions present significant risks for implementation. On the other hand, in countries with relatively better governance, donor governments are more likely to engage with the government. The decision to bypass the regime in countries with poor governance is motivated by the risks of aid capture by the recipient government. In countries with better governance, donor governments perceive a lower risk of aid capture and are thus more willing to collaborate with the recipient government.

## **2.2 Research Gap**

The existing research on the subject differs from the focus of this thesis, creating an evident gap in the current literature. To illustrate this, studies by Dietrich (2013), Acht et al. (2015), and Radelet (2004) have examined the quality of government rather than levels of democracy as the independent variable, which is a distinct area of research. These studies have produced interesting findings, such as how donor considerations affect aid allocation to state or non-state actors due to the risk of aid being captured by the recipient government. However, it is also crucial to acknowledge that high-quality governments are not exclusive to democracies, and

low-quality governments are not limited to undemocratic countries. Therefore, it is unwise to assume that issues such as aid capture will manifest equally in both types of countries. Consequently, donors such as Sida may not adopt the same selection approach for aid recipients in cases where there is poor governance or low levels of democracy.

One should neither assume that the findings of Dietrich and Murdie's (2017) and Acht et al.'s (2015) research, which propose that donor governments such as Sweden are inclined to react to human rights abuses, corruption controversies, and military expenditure by providing aid to non-state actors, can be applied to this thesis. Although several studies indicate that such serious events often receive more media attention and that this coverage can influence the allocation of aid (Dietrich & Murdie, 2017; Rioux & Van Belle, 2005; Joly, 2014), it is essential to recognize that a decline in democracy within the recipient country may not necessarily attract the same level of media coverage or affect the distribution of aid to the same degree as presumed without further investigation.

Although Allen and Flynn's (2018) research focuses on a different aspect than the thesis at hand, it offers valuable insights into how domestic politics in donor countries influence aid allocation in recipient countries. However, it is important to note that their findings cannot be directly applied to the Swedish context due to their categorization of political parties as either liberal or conservative. In Sweden, this categorization is not applicable because the Moderate party, which is often considered liberal conservative, has historically formed coalitions with both the Christian Democrats (a conservative party) and the Liberals (a liberal party). Additionally, like the previous research mentioned, Allen and Flynn (2018) do not delve into the decision-making process within donor governments, including *how* decisions are formulated and *why* they are made. To draw more accurate conclusions regarding donor motives and priorities, it is necessary to thoroughly examine the selection process and criteria used by donors to allocate aid to specific recipients.

The study conducted by Dietrich (2021) is groundbreaking because it goes beyond only using comparative statistical analysis to merely hypothesize donor motivations and interests based on allocation patterns. Instead, Dietrich (2021) examines the decision-making process of Swedish aid officials, among others, and sheds light on Sweden's neoliberal approach to foreign aid. This neoliberal approach prioritizes short-term contracting and allocation through non-state actors. Although the study by Dietrich (2021) holds significant importance for this thesis, it does not entirely align with its focus. As stated, the main objective of this thesis is to explore the implications and examine how Sida aid officials consider the role of democracy while

choosing aid recipients between state or non-state actors, which Dietrich (2021) does not fully address.

## **2.3 Research Problem and Research Contribution**

The recipient selection process is likely a complex task for Sida that requires consideration of several factors, depending on whether the recipient is a state or non-state actor. Hence, the significance of this thesis partly lies in its ability to shed light on the different considerations that arise for Sida officials when selecting aid recipients. Previous research indicates that government-to-government aid can enhance country ownership and promote sustainable implementation efforts, but it can also result in corruption, bureaucratic inefficiencies, and aid capture. On the other hand, providing aid directly to the people can bypass recipient structures and leverage local expertise, but it can also influence recipient politics and divert attention from transformative projects (Dietrich, 2021; Dietrich, 2013).

The various potential outcomes mentioned above present ethical dilemmas encountered by donors when selecting aid recipients. For donors, possessing an imbalanced portfolio, characterized by excessive or insufficient state-to-state collaboration, can hinder democratic advancement. Hence, the careful selection of suitable aid recipients holds great importance, and conducting a thorough examination of the decision-making process becomes essential to acquire a more thorough understanding of the factors that Sida considers while making such choices.

The study of this topic holds significant academic and practical value as it offers insight into how donor governments like Sweden, who have altruistic and prominent development aid policies and yet limited international influence, prioritize democratic values and principles that inform their foreign aid policies and programs. By conducting a comprehensive analysis of the decision-making process and the factors that emerge when recipient countries face democratic regression, this theory-building thesis goes beyond mere speculation about donor motivations and interests based on allocation patterns, which potentially have significant applicability for similar donor governments such as Denmark, Norway, and the Netherlands.

## **3. Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework of this thesis builds upon existing research and established theories. Firstly, it incorporates the theory of "wicked problems" by Ramalingam et al. (2014) to recognize the complex environment that aid officials encounter. Next, it considers various potential factors that may influence the decision-making process of these officials. These factors were partly identified through the contingency theory, which emphasizes how contextual factors shape organizational outcomes, as interpreted by Honig and Gulrajani (2018). Other scholars and publications are also included in the same sub-section to provide insights on how risk awareness and incentives for complying with institutional rules and practices impact aid officials. The framework finally introduces the key concept of democracy, which includes a wide range of aspects to ensure that important elements are not overlooked. This is important because each interview participant may have their own unique understanding of the concept.

### **3.1 Complexity in International Development Cooperation**

Donor agencies' objective is to advance social, economic, and political progress while navigating through a multitude of complex factors. These factors encompass uncertainty, conflicting values, distinctive circumstances, and unstable structures, which amplify the complexity of their work (Ramalingam, et al., 2014; Ramalingam, Jones, Reba & Young, 2008).

In the past, foreign aid efforts relied on promoting and supporting development through "best practices". However, this approach often prioritized the needs of aid bureaucracies rather than being evidence-based. Furthermore, the problems these complex interventions address are known as "wicked problems" and have challenging aspects. Firstly, wicked problems are difficult to define as they have multiple explanations and subjective perceptions. The solution depends on how the problem is understood (Ramalingam et al., 2014).

Secondly, there are no universally applicable criteria to determine right or wrong solutions for wicked problems. Solutions can only be evaluated in comparison to each other, which adds complexity to decision-making. Thirdly, wicked problems are often symptoms of interconnected issues, making it hard to identify a single root cause. Addressing one aspect may have unintended consequences elsewhere (Ramalingam et al., 2014). Fourthly, each wicked problem is unique, and standardized approaches may not capture its complexities. Tailored and context-specific solutions are necessary to consider the specific circumstances and complexities (Ramalingam et al., 2014). Finally, donor agencies must adopt a holistic and adaptable approach



that embraces complexity, uncertainty, and the uniqueness of each problem (Ramalingam et al., 2014).

In this thesis, "complexity" refers thus to the challenges encountered by aid officials in their work, often referred to as wicked problems. As presented above, these problems are characterized by their interconnected and unique nature, making precise definitions difficult. Furthermore, there are no universally applicable criteria for determining the correct solutions. As a result, aid officials must adopt an adaptable approach that recognizes and embraces complexity, uncertainty, and the distinctive aspects of each problem.

## **3.2 The Decision-Making Process in Donor Governments**

In more simplistic terms than the study by Ramalingam et al. (2014), Berthélemy and Tichit (2004) emphasized two main questions that donors face when deciding how to distribute aid: whether to provide aid to a particular recipient and, if so, how much aid to provide. However, as pointed out by Ramalingam et al. (2014), the reality in which aid officials work is rarely so straightforward. This text discusses various factors that influence decision-making in aid operations, including being aware of risks, following institutional rules, dealing with administrative burdens, adapting to implementation challenges, and navigating political constraints.

### **3.2.1 Risk Awareness in Decision-Making**

Aid officials responsible for aid operations in donor governments consider various factors. For example, they prioritize minimizing the risks associated with aid implementation while also promoting development in foreign countries (Dietrich, 2013; 2021). To achieve this, aid officials gather information about the risks involved in implementing aid projects and rely on indicators that reflect the quality of governance in the recipient countries. Donors have become more cautious in the years following the financial crisis and have shown greater reluctance to take risks with public funds. This is because one of their primary concerns is the potential for corruption or weak governance in the recipient countries, which increases the risk of aid being misused or mismanaged due to agency problems (Dietrich, 2013; Svensson, 2000; Reinikka & Svensson, 2004; Djankov, Montalvo & Reynal-Querol, 2008; OECD, 2023a).

The thesis defines "risk awareness" as perceiving the risks associated with mismanaging public funds in aid allocation, referred to as "aid capture" by Dietrich (2013). This concept encompasses situations where corrupt officials or bureaucrats intentionally divert aid, as well as cases where aid is wasted due to the recipient country's limited capacity to effectively utilize it.

### **3.2.2 Compliance Incentives**

The decision-making process of aid officials is also influenced by the institutional environment in which they operate. Institutional rules and practices direct their decisions and actions, including how they respond to aid delivery in recipient countries. These rules and practices authorize, enable, and justify certain delivery tactics while excluding others, which ensures that aid officials within the same organization respond to aid delivery in a consistent manner (Dietrich, 2021; Büthe & Mattli, 2013).

In addition, institutional factors can impact aid officials' decision-making by providing incentives for certain behaviors. Compliance with institutional rules and practices can lead to professional gains, such as career advancement or larger budgets. On the other hand, non-compliance can result in negative consequences, such as loss of funding or reputational damage (Dietrich, 2021).

Institutional incentives can also affect allocation decisions, as research indicates that channeling aid through International Monetary Fund (IMF) programs can decrease the likelihood of aid officials being held accountable for poor allocation decisions. Even if aid projects fail or funds are mismanaged, aid officials can point to the presence of an IMF program as a higher authority legitimating their decisions (Stubbs, Kentikelenis & King, 2016).

In this thesis, the term “compliance incentives” encompasses various factors that motivate individuals to comply with institutional rules and practices. These factors include professional gains, career advancement, and maintaining a positive reputation. On the other hand, non-compliance can lead to negative consequences, such as a loss of funding. This suggests that institutional norms can influence the behavior of aid officials.

### **3.2.3 Administrative Burden**

One major barrier to improved internal working methods in development organizations is thus the need to account for results, which can also divert attention away from fieldwork and undermine the use of flexible working approaches. Development agencies commonly use results measurement and reporting systems to monitor progress and assess performance (Honig & Gulrajani, 2018).

However, measuring the qualities of context sensitivity, adaptability, and flexibility can be difficult, as these qualities are challenging to quantify and compare across different contexts. When performance is measured solely based on easily quantifiable tasks, such as the number of completed projects or funds disbursed, it may discourage workers from investing time and effort in non-measurable tasks that are equally crucial for achieving the donor agency's goals.

This phenomenon has been labeled as "obsessive measurement disorder" by some experts, who contend that compliance requirements can consume valuable time and resources that should be spent on more relevant tasks (Honig & Gulrajani, 2018).

In this thesis, the term "administrative burden" represents the time, effort, and resources that aid agencies need to invest in complying with results measurement and reporting systems. These requirements often draw attention away from actual fieldwork and impede the implementation of flexible working approaches. Furthermore, this burden becomes even more pronounced when there is an excessive demand for compliance, depleting valuable time and resources that could be better utilized for more relevant tasks. Additionally, within the scope of this study, the term also includes the time needed to conduct audits and assessments of potential partner organizations for collaboration.

### ***3.2.4 Flexibility in Implementation***

Government donor agencies such as the UK's DFID and the US's USAID are prioritizing internal organizational changes to enhance their flexibility and adaptability in their implementation processes. These changes enable them to reform their internal processes and better align with local conditions (Honig & Gulrajani, 2018).

However, it is not enough for donors to simply understand the operating context. They must utilize the information they gather to tailor their projects to the unique realities of each specific context. Instead of relying on universal models based on objective scientific investigation, it is crucial to consider solutions that are most suitable for a particular context. In situations where the outcomes of interventions are unpredictable, the process of adapting to the context must be continuous throughout the entire lifespan of the project, rather than just at the beginning (Honig & Gulrajani, 2018).

As contexts evolve, organizations must be capable of reorienting themselves and responding to shifting circumstances to seize opportune moments. The key concept here is "iterative," which involves trying something, learning from it, and making further attempts. To adapt iteratively, an organization requires the flexibility to adjust as circumstances change.

Consistent with Honig and Gulrajani (2018), "flexibility" refers to the capacity to tailor projects to the unique circumstances of specific contexts instead of using standardized approaches. It emphasizes continual adaptation throughout the entire project duration, especially in situations that are unpredictable. The concept of flexibility is characterized by an iterative process, which entails experimenting, learning from experience, and making additional adjustments in response to changing circumstances. By embracing flexibility, organizations

gain the ability to capitalize on favorable opportunities, identify unproductive paths, foster innovation, and modify their course as necessary.

### **3.2.5 Political Constraints**

Another possible barrier to improved internal working methods is the political environment in which donor agencies function. Political constraints can restrict the autonomy of aid workers and constrain their ability to work contingently. When aid agencies are subject to tight political control, they may have less discretion to adapt their interventions to local conditions or respond to emerging needs. In some cases, political decision-makers may not prioritize the success of aid interventions, as their primary goal is to satisfy domestic stakeholders (Honig & Gulrajani, 2018).

In a rapidly evolving political landscape shaped by daily news headlines that have the power to shape public opinion, maintaining a consistent direction for the civil service becomes increasingly challenging, especially in the complex domain of international development cooperation. This challenge arises from the fact that development processes rarely follow a linear path and frequently require long-term interventions. The growing complexity of policy development, further exacerbated by global crises and the relentless 24-hour news cycle, has made it more difficult to effectively coordinate efforts across government bodies, engage diverse stakeholders, and propose viable policy solutions to address complex and multifaceted issues (OECD, 2023b).

This thesis conceptualizes "political constraints" as the inherent tension arising from divergent tasks and priorities within the political-administrative interface, specifically between civil servants, namely Sida officials, and elected politicians.

## **3.3 Democracy**

The theoretical framework of this thesis acknowledges various definitions and conceptualizations of democracy. The diverse definitions of democracy primarily align with the principles outlined by the V-Dem Institute (2023): egalitarian, deliberative, participatory, electoral, and liberal democracy.

Democracy is commonly defined as "rule by the people" and is based on the idea that citizens should have a say in the decisions that affect their lives (Coppedge et al., 2011). This egalitarian principle emphasizes political involvement and equality in rights and resources, resulting in a more equal distribution of resources across groups, leading to political equality and hence democracy (Sigman & Lindberg, 2019; V-Dem Institute, 2023).

However, there are additional types of democracy definitions, each with its distinct characteristics. One of these is deliberative democracy, which allows citizens to participate in the governance of their society either directly or through their representatives. The objective is to provide a platform for participants to present and respond to reasons in order to justify the laws under which they live together. Deliberative democracy prioritizes public reasoning that is focused on the common good, and respectful dialogue among informed and competent participants who are open to persuasion is essential to achieving this objective (Gutmann & Thompson, 2004; V-Dem Institute, 2023).

Another type of democracy is participatory democracy, which emphasizes active participation by citizens in all political processes, electoral and non-electoral, through civil society organizations, mechanisms of direct democracy, and participation and representation through local and regional governments. This type of democracy places great importance on citizen engagement in decision-making and believes that citizens should have a say in the decisions that affect their lives (V-Dem Institute, 2023).

Electoral democracy is another type of democracy that is characterized by a country that conducts free and fair multiparty elections and ensures sufficient institutional guarantees of democracy, such as freedom of association, male and female suffrage, clean elections, an elected executive, and freedom of expression. This type of democracy emphasizes the importance of free and fair elections, which are a crucial component of any democratic system (Lührmann, Tannenberg & Lindberg, 2018; V-Dem Institute, 2023).

Finally, liberal democracy embodies the importance of protecting individual and minority rights against both the tyranny of the state and the tyranny of the majority. It also ensures effective checks and balances between institutions, including a strong rule of law, constitutionally protected civil liberties, an independent judiciary, and a strong parliament that can hold the executive to account and limit its powers. This type of democracy emphasizes the importance of protecting the rights of all citizens and ensuring that no group or individual can dominate or control the political process (Lührmann et al., 2018; Coppedge et al., 2011; V-Dem Institute, 2023).

### **3.4 Summary of the Theoretical Framework**

This thesis builds upon previous research and theories that examines factors relevant to decision-making in international development. It also explores how the current research portrays democracy. Although each case should be approached individually, there are shared

attributes highlighted by the theoretical framework. These attributes include: 1) recognizing the complex nature of international development cooperation, 2) acknowledging the bureaucratic hurdles encountered by aid officials. Drawing on the theoretical expectations set by earlier research, an analytical framework is developed for further implementation. The analysis employs thematic analysis, focusing on three key themes: understanding external factors and global trends, addressing challenges in selecting aid recipients, and addressing political obstacles when ending partnerships.

## 4. Method and Material

This chapter of the thesis outlines the methodology employed to investigate the research question. While prior studies in this field have relied heavily on comparative statistical analysis to hypothesize donor motivations and interests based on allocation patterns, this research recognizes the limitations of this approach when investigating abstract concepts like donor motives in a study with limited analysis units like this. Therefore, a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods is utilized to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the topic. By combining the advantages of multiple research methods and overcoming their limitations, this mixed-method approach provides valuable insights into the decision-making process that cannot be concluded solely from the distribution patterns (Gerring, 2017).

This thesis uses a mixed-method case study design to examine the role of recipient countries' democracy in Sida officials' considerations when selecting aid recipients and deciding to withdraw funding from state actors or countries themselves. The research follows a step-by-step approach, starting with collecting secondary data on Sida's aid disbursements to recipient countries in which they have long-term strategies, the levels of democracy and quality of governance in those countries, Sweden's trade relationship with them, and Sida's corresponding country strategies.

The descriptive data presented in this thesis fulfills several important functions. Firstly, it offers *prima facie* evidence of observed trends spanning from 2000 to 2022, which assists in the identification of countries that are relevant for further examination. Consequently, this facilitates the selection of appropriate interview respondents to be contacted. Furthermore, the data serves as a valuable reference for formulating relevant and thought-provoking follow-up questions during the interviews. Finally, it provides transparency and context to the reader, establishing the backdrop against which the interview respondents offer their answers.

To better understand Sida's considerations, motivations, and criteria for selecting aid recipients, nine semi-structured interviews were conducted with individuals with experience working at Sida, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, as well as a subject-specific expert from EBA. The interviews serve as the main empirical data for this study. Interviews are useful for exploring abstract concepts such as donor motives, and the reasoning behind the selection of interviewees is justified by the aim to obtain their personal and specialized knowledge, which would otherwise be unavailable or difficult to access (Gerring, 2017). Thematic analysis was

then employed to analyze the data collected from these interviews. This approach helps identify significant patterns, referred to as themes, within the dataset (Braun & Clarke, 2012).

The following section provides a detailed description of the research methodology employed in this study.

## **4.1 Data Collection Methods and Considerations for Descriptive Data**

This section describes the case selection, sampling method, and methodological considerations considered when employing secondary data from various sources.

### ***4.1.1 Case Selection and Sampling Method***

The case selection and sampling method of the descriptive statistics in this thesis are carefully considered in order to provide a descriptive representation into the considerations that arise in the decision-making process of the Swedish government regarding the provision of development aid to state or non-state actors in the recipient country. Firstly, the selected timeframe of 2000 to 2022 offers a unique chance to monitor changes in democracy, aid allocation patterns, and government quality over time. This period includes significant global events related to shifts in democratic levels, and any potential delays can be observed. The V-Dem Institute's Democracy Report of 2022 supports this selection, as it notes that the number of liberal democracies peaked in 2012 but has since decreased to the lowest levels of democracy seen in over 25 years (V-Dem Institute, 2022a).

To ensure that the research is focused and relevant, only recipient countries for which Sida has long-term strategies were used in the study. Furthermore, given the focus of the study, only countries where Sida distributes aid to government institutions during the investigation period are of interest. Screening out countries that have had significant conflicts and civil wars is also important as it may have a major impact on whether Sida distributes aid to state institutions or not.

The identification of interesting cases is based on typical cases rather than a most similar or most different case study design. The idea is for the study to be a comparative case study that shows typical cases of changes in Sida's allocation to state institutions and non-state institutions. The cases include countries with conflicting outcomes, such as countries with similar levels of democracy where Sida has adopted different approaches for allocating aid to state or non-state actors, as well as countries with varying characteristics where Sida has used similar approaches for aid allocation. This approach would provide valuable insights into the factors that influence the allocation of development aid to different types of recipient actors.



The recipient countries in which Sida has long-term strategies already have a geographic focus, with most countries located in Sub-Saharan Africa or Asia, as well as some countries in Latin America and the MENA region. This thesis specifically selected three countries from Sub-Saharan Africa and two from Asia, namely Kenya, Tanzania, Zambia, Bangladesh, and Cambodia. The rationale for selecting these countries aligns with the criteria mentioned earlier. All of them have received a significant amount of aid from state actors in the past, have experienced fewer conflicts and civil wars compared to other recipient countries, or have established long-term commitments with Sida.

For instance, each African country has unique recipient characteristics and outcomes in aid allocation. Over time, Sida's distribution of aid to state actors has changed in all three countries, but distinct patterns exist. In Tanzania, state actors consistently received the majority of Sida's development aid, while Kenya and Zambia have seen a decline in aid allocation to state actors. Moreover, these countries have varying levels of democracy and government quality, which adds complexity to understanding Sida's motives behind the aid distribution patterns.

The selection of Bangladesh and Cambodia was based on conflicting findings. These countries exhibit distinctive recipient characteristics and outcomes in aid allocation, making it interesting to include interview respondents with relevant experience working in these nations. The countries have experienced different changes in democracy patterns, government quality, and Sida's allocation strategies to state actors. Over time, Sida's portfolio in Cambodia has included more state-to-state cooperation compared to Bangladesh, and Cambodia also demonstrates stronger indicators of QoG. However, despite having lower QoG, Bangladesh maintains a more prominent trade relationship with Sweden and possesses a stronger democracy.

#### ***4.1.2 Benefits and Considerations of Using Openaid for Sida's Aid Disbursement Data***

The data on Sida's development aid is obtained from Openaid. This website grants access to open government data on Swedish aid disbursements, except for the information that is protected by the Public Access to Information and Secrecy Act or the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) (Sida, 2021). The purpose of collecting this data is to create a clear visual representation of the trend in state-to-state cooperation with the recipient country. This is

achieved by graphing the percentage of total aid volume channeled through the recipient government on the Y-axis, with years from 2000 to 2022 on the X-axis.

Using Openaid as a source offers several methodological benefits, including source criticism, validity, and reliability issues. Since Openaid is managed by Sida, the quality and accuracy of the data are ensured. Furthermore, the openness of the data allows for source criticism and verification, contributing to the validity of the findings. However, in order to interpret the data on Sida's development aid disbursements, it is important to consider that Sida may have outstanding payments to manage during the study period, which could affect the data. For example, a decrease in disbursements may indicate a reduction in aid or the phasing out of a particular strategy. Hence, it is crucial to consider the information presented in the country strategies to comprehend the fundamental causes behind any observed changes, rather than solely depending on the data depicted in the graphs.

### ***4.1.3 Benefits and Considerations of Using the V-Dem Institute for Democracy Measurement***

The data gathered from Openaid is compared to the country scores obtained from the V-Dem Institute's democracy indexes. The decision to use data from the V-Dem Institute is based on the reliability of the indexes, as well as criticisms directed towards the commonly used Freedom House Index as a means of democracy measurement in research. Many scholars have expressed concerns about the methodology, potential biases, the focus on Western values, funding sources, and the limited definition of democracy in the Freedom House Index (Steiner, 2016). In contrast, the democracy indexes of the V-Dem Institute provide a more reliable and valid alternative for measuring democracy.

In comparison to the Freedom House Index, which involves a smaller pool of experts, does not account for variation in judgment among experts, and has limited transparency in its methodology, the V-Dem Institute Indexes has a vast network of around 3,700 experts from various countries who create expert-coded data to minimize potential biases.

The V-Dem Institute indexes provide a detailed account of democracy, encompassing five overarching principles: electoral, liberal, participatory, deliberative, and egalitarian democracy. This definition offers a more nuanced and comprehensive definition of democracy, overcoming the limitations of the Freedom House Index, which focuses on a narrow range of political rights and civil liberties. (V-Dem Institute, 2022b)

#### **4.1.4 Data Collection Considerations Regarding Quality of Government and Trade**

The remaining data is based on established research, which shows that the recipient country's level of QoG affects aid distribution. To identify any potential self-interest in the recipient country, scholars studying foreign aid allocation often consider the economic connections between the donor and recipient nations. Therefore, this thesis includes graphs depicting the QoG levels in recipient countries and Sweden's trade relationship with them.

To capture the quality of governance in recipient countries, the study utilizes data from the World Bank's Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI) project (World Bank, 2022). The WGI project measures the quality of governance on a scale ranging from -2.5 (weak) to +2.5 (strong) governance performance, and data is consequently collected from the countries in which Sida has long-term development strategies. The WGI project covers six key governance dimensions: voice and accountability, regulatory quality, government effectiveness, rule of law, corruption control, and political stability and violence.

This thesis utilizes data from four of these governance dimensions, namely recipient government effectiveness, rule of law, corruption control, and political stability and violence. It is important to note, however, that the data on governance quality used in this study only covers the period from 2000 to 2021 and is missing data for the years 2001 and 2022, as opposed to the time period used in the rest of the descriptive statistics (2000 to 2022). The selection of these variables was informed by previous research, which suggests that factors such as corruption, government quality, human rights violations, and military expenditures have a significant influence on the allocation of aid by donors, particularly in deciding whether aid is directed towards state actors or non-state actors.

The reason for choosing these governance indicators is also due to their apparent likelihood to affect donor selection of state or non-state actors in the recipient country based on their association with specific governance aspects. To illustrate this, the corruption control indicator measures the perception of public power being used for private gain, which could indicate the state being "captured" by elites and private interests. This could make donors hesitant to provide aid to state actors or non-state actors linked to such practices.

Lastly, to consider Sweden's strategic and non-developmental interests in the recipient country, this thesis seeks to visualize the total values of goods imported and exported between Sweden and the recipient countries, obtained from Statistics Sweden - a Swedish governmental

agency responsible for producing official statistics for decision-making, debate and research (Statistics Sweden, 2023).

## **4.2 Data Collection Methods and Considerations for Semi-Structured Interviews**

This section of the thesis contains the most critical data and explores the motivations that drive Sida's behavior as an aid donor to address the research question. To gather the necessary data, nine semi-structured interviews were conducted, which have been shown to offer several advantages over other methods, as emphasized by Bryman (2016) and Magnusson and Marecek (2015).

Semi-structured interviews allow for spontaneous responses, and the emergence of new ideas and theories, and give the interviewer the freedom to steer the conversation and ask fruitful follow-up questions to obtain valuable information (Bryman, 2016; Magnusson & Marecek, 2015). In this context, where the aim is to gain a deeper understanding of the interviewees' expertise, semi-structured interviews are an excellent choice. They create a relaxed and conversational atmosphere that encourages respondents to express their thoughts and knowledge freely, thereby providing valuable insights into the decision-making process and motivations driving Sida's behavior as an aid donor.

### ***4.2.1 Case Selection and Sampling Method***

In order to identify the most appropriate cases for the interviews, the individuals responsible for the country strategies outlined in the descriptive data chapter were contacted (see interview invitation in Appendix A). In the country strategies obtained from Openaid, the name of the responsible officials who had signed them can be obtained. The identified officials were then contacted either to participate in the interviews or to suggest suitable respondents. However, it is noteworthy that certain challenges<sup>1</sup> were encountered while contacting officials responsible for implementing specific country strategies.

In such instances, the study adopted an alternative approach of seeking assistance from current senior officials at Sida who possess specialized knowledge about the decision-making process or the recipient country in question, although they were not responsible for the

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<sup>1</sup> These difficulties were attributed to a variety of factors such as the unfortunate passing of officials, officials who had not dealt with international development cooperation issues for an extended period and deemed themselves irrelevant to the study, or a lack of response to emails and phone calls from identified respondents.

identified strategies. This approach ensured that appropriate respondents were identified for the study, despite the aforementioned difficulties.

In addition to current government officials who work for Sida or are associated with Sida at a Swedish Embassy, the study also interviewed a former Sida official working at an Intergovernmental Organization (IGO) and a subject expert from the Expert Group for Aid Studies (EBA). These interviews aimed to obtain an impartial and comprehensive understanding of Sweden's foreign aid policy and to gain valuable insights into Sida's decision-making process.

The snowball sampling method was used to gather data from several of the respondents. This involved initially identifying a group of individuals who possessed the necessary knowledge and experience to provide valuable insights into the research problem (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). These individuals were then asked to recommend others who could also contribute to the study. This approach ensured that a diverse range of perspectives from field experts was included in the research.

It is important to recognize that the snowball sampling method is vulnerable to various biases as participants are not selected from a pre-established sampling frame. This implies that certain individuals may be deliberately chosen to be included in the sample, while others may be unintentionally excluded without the researcher's knowledge (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). However, despite this limitation, it was determined that snowball sampling was the most practical approach to access the necessary respondents for the interviews.

The sampling method for this research does not prioritize representativeness among the interview respondents, but rather their expertise and relevance to the study (Magnusson & Marecek, 2015; Bryman, 2016). This means that the individuals selected for the interviews are chosen based on their knowledge and connection to the research question, rather than their ability to reflect the views of the public.

Furthermore, the respondents have not been selected to provide information encompassing the entire period being examined, as explored in the descriptive data section, which spans from 2000 to 2022. This is because it could be challenging for them to recall their perceptions at specific moments. Rather, the primary objective of the interviews is to gain insights into the decision-making process of Sida and the considerations of aid officials in selecting aid recipients.

## **4.2.2 Methodological Considerations**

Methodological considerations are essential when conducting research, particularly when using semi-structured interviews as a data collection method. Although the proposed multi-method research approach for this study, which combines descriptive statistics and data with semi-structured interviews, is well-suited for the topic at hand, the use of interviews as a research method raises concerns related to quality and reliability that must be addressed.

One significant concern is the qualifications of the respondents in the study. To ensure the validity of the results, highly qualified individuals from Sida, Swedish Embassies, a former Sida official at an IGO, and a subject-expert at EBA was selected for the interviews. To prevent any reliability and validity issues, a comprehensive and honest justification of the selection of interview respondents and their potential biases was conducted systematically to prevent any reliability and validity issues (see Appendix B for a detailed presentation of the interview respondents).

Another critical consideration is the accuracy and validity of the data collected during the interviews. Semi-structured interviews allow for open-ended responses, making it crucial to ensure that the questions are clear, unbiased, and that responses are accurately recorded and transcribed. Hence, raw data from the interviews were recorded and transcribed to identify any potential flaws, as suggested by Bryman (2016).

Anonymity is another factor to consider. It is important to mention that the identities of the interviewees are kept anonymous, with only a few individuals requesting to remain so. However, these individuals did agree to reveal their positions. Therefore, the study refers to the respondents based on their current positions. Given this, it is worth noting that their relevance to the study may also be influenced by their past positions, which are further detailed in Appendix B. When referring to the individuals to their current positions, it is very important to highlight that these individuals are expressing their personal viewpoints on the research topic and are not representing their respective organizations.

Another issue that needs to be addressed is the sample size. The study includes a total of nine interviews, which fulfills the minimum requirement for reaching saturation, as outlined by Hennink and Kaiser (2022). Towards the later interviews, the collected data started to exhibit similarities, with recurring answers and limited potential for obtaining new information. Therefore, it was assessed that conducting additional interviews would not yield any further insights.

However, one limitation of the study is that the sample does not fully represent the entire decision-making process of Swedish development aid. The interviews were conducted with individuals experienced in the aid recipient selection process. However, it should be noted that the decision-making process is not solely controlled by Sida. Initially, the intention was to interview politicians and staff from the Ministry for Foreign Affairs involved in international development cooperation. Unfortunately, despite attempts, no responses were received from these individuals, resulting in their perspectives being excluded. Nonetheless, the perspective of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs was included through the interviewee, the Head of Development Cooperation in Rwanda (HDCR), who has relevant experience in international development cooperation (see Table 1 for a summary of the nine respondents and a more detailed version in Appendix B).

In addition to technical considerations, there are ethical concerns regarding the use of semi-structured interviews. Since interview respondents have control over the conversation, their influence on the study results is significant, especially when a relatively small number of people are interviewed. To ensure ethical and responsible research, it was crucial to inform interviewees about their rights and obligations and obtain their informed consent prior to conducting the interviews. This approach respected the rights and dignity of the interviewees throughout the process (see the interview guide in Appendix C for details on how this was carried out).

**Table 1. Summary of Interview Participants' Details**

<b>Position</b>	<b>Named in Research</b>	<b>Date &amp; Duration</b>
Head of Budget and Programme Performance, Intergovernmental Organization	Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning Specialist (MELS)	April 26 <sup>th</sup> , 2023 & 52 minutes
Head of Development Cooperation, Embassy of Sweden in Tanzania	Head of Development Cooperation in Tanzania (HDCT)	April 28 <sup>th</sup> , 2023 & 47 minutes
Managing Director, EBA	Managing Director at EBA (MDEBA)	April 28 <sup>th</sup> , 2023 & 54 minutes
Senior Advisor, Sida	Senior Advisor at Sida (SAS)	May 8 <sup>th</sup> , 2023 & 57 minutes

Counselor, Deputy Head of Development Cooperation, and Senior Program Manager, Embassy of Sweden in Kenya	Counselor in Kenya (CK)	May 8, 2023 & 50 minutes
Policy Specialist, Sida	Policy Specialist (PS)	May 9 <sup>th</sup> , 2023 & 52 minutes
Head of Unit for Middle East and North Africa, Sida	Head of Unit for MENA (HMENA)	May 10 <sup>th</sup> , 2023 & 55 minutes
Head of Unit for Southern, West-, Central Africa, Regional Coordination, Team Democracy	Head of Unit within Africa (HUA)	May 12 <sup>th</sup> , 2023 & 37 minutes
Head of Development Cooperation, Embassy of Sweden in Rwanda	Head of Development Cooperation in Rwanda (HDCR)	May 16 <sup>th</sup> , 2023 & 46 minutes

#### **4.2.3 Analytical Framework**

This thesis employs a thematic analysis method inspired by Braun and Clarke (2012) to establish the analytical framework. Thematic analysis is a flexible and accessible approach that allows for the identification and exploration of patterns and themes within qualitative data. The aim of using this method is to gain a comprehensive understanding of the research topic and address the research question effectively.

To ensure the reliability and validity of the analysis, a systematic process was followed. Firstly, the interview data were recorded and transcribed to accurately represent the participants' responses. Following Bryman's (2016) recommendation, a careful examination of the transcriptions was conducted to identify possible flaws and ensure data integrity. The analysis process began with a thorough engagement with the data, including audio recordings, transcripts, and notes. This engagement in the data facilitated familiarity with the nuances and intricacies of the data, forming the foundation for subsequent analysis. Initial codes were then generated as labels or tags to identify relevant features within the data.

These codes were developed through a combination of descriptive and interpretive elements, ensuring inclusivity and systematization. Modifications or new codes emerged during



the analysis process, reflecting the iterative nature of thematic analysis and responsiveness to the data. The next phase involved constructing themes by reviewing the coded data for similarities and overlaps. This process aimed to identify connections and patterns, grouping related codes into coherent themes and subthemes. Both inductive and deductive approaches were utilized, allowing new codes and themes to emerge while incorporating elements from the pre-existing theoretical framework outlined in Chapter 3. This balanced approach maintained consistency with existing knowledge while accommodating new perspectives from the data (Braun & Clarke, 2012).

To ensure credibility and rigor, a thorough quality checking process was undertaken. Themes were assessed against data extracts, critically evaluating their functionality and relevance. This phase enhanced the overall robustness of the analysis, ensuring that the identified themes accurately captured the data and addressed the research question. The final phases of the analysis involved defining and naming the themes and producing the final report. Representative data extracts were selected for each theme and analyzed in-depth, providing a rich understanding of the underlying concepts. The final report presented the themes, their definitions, and supporting evidence, contributing to the overall understanding of the subject matter (Braun & Clarke, 2012).

The adoption of thematic analysis as the analytical framework was motivated by its accessibility and flexibility. Braun and Clarke (2012) highlight its suitability for exploring complex phenomena and capturing multiple perspectives. The coding scheme used in the analysis process can be found in Appendix D, providing a transparent overview of the codes and their relationships within the thematic analysis. Including this coding scheme enhances the transparency and replicability of the analysis, facilitating future researchers to build upon and validate the findings. Below in Table 2, the researcher will find a concise summary of the themes and subthemes employed in the analysis.

**Table 2. Themes and Subthemes Summary**

<b>Themes</b>	<b>External Factors</b>	<b>Choice of Aid Recipient</b>	<b>Ending Partnerships</b>
<b>Subthemes</b>	Democracy Complexity Donor Coordination Changes in Aid Modality	Risk Awareness Administrative Burden Compliance Incentives Flexibility Strategy Inheritance	Political Constraints

## 5. Descriptive Data

The purpose of this chapter of the thesis is to provide a detailed descriptive analysis of Sida's development aid allocation to state or non-state actors in recipient countries. The data is collected from 37 countries that had long-term and country-specific strategies with Sida between 2000 and 2022. The data collected for the remaining 32 countries can be found in Appendix E.<sup>2</sup>

The analysis primarily concentrates on Sub-Saharan African and Asian countries since they represent the majority of countries with which Sida has long-term strategies. Specifically, the thesis examines five countries, namely Kenya, Tanzania, Zambia, Bangladesh, and Cambodia, to present interesting and sometimes contradictory findings that offer meaningful information for the interviews.

The data presented in the graphs include the percentage of Sida's aid that flows through state actors, the level of democracy and government quality in the recipient countries, and the trade relationship<sup>3</sup> between these countries and Sweden. Additionally, information from Sida's strategies with the country is included to understand the data presented.

### 5.1 Sub-Saharan African Countries

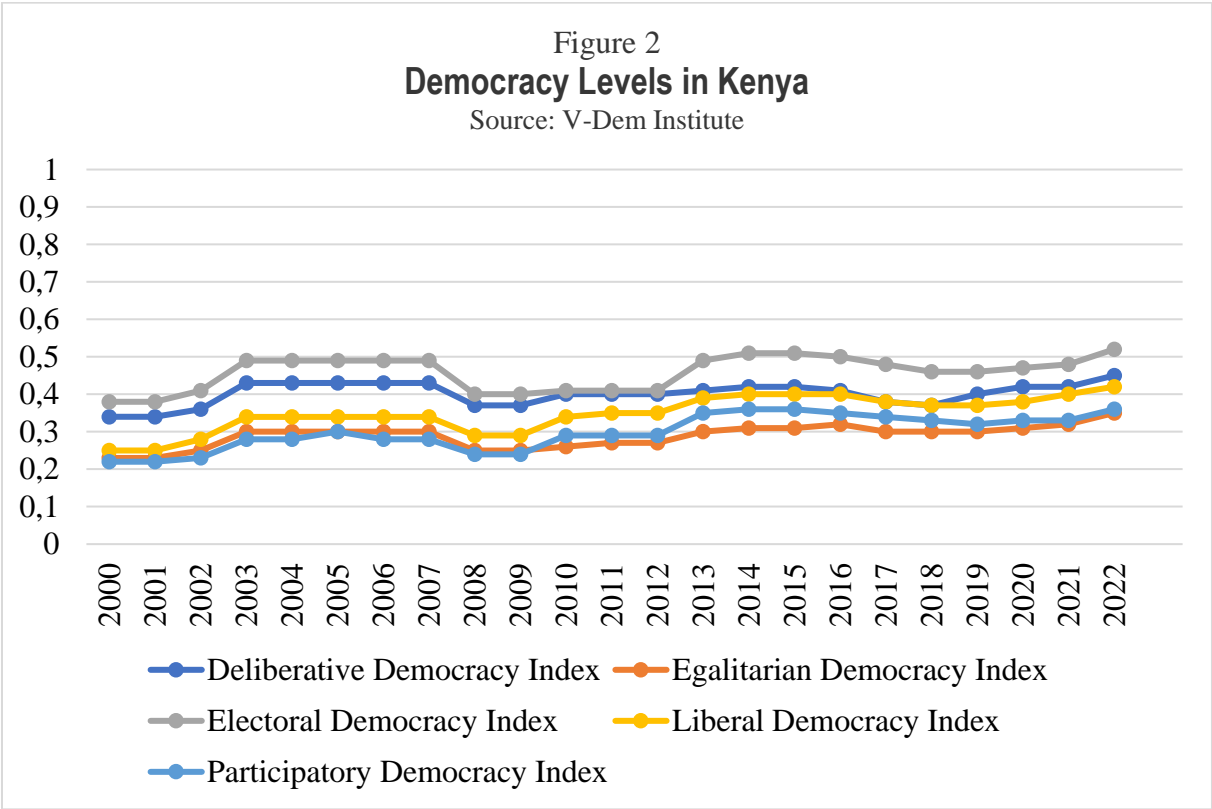
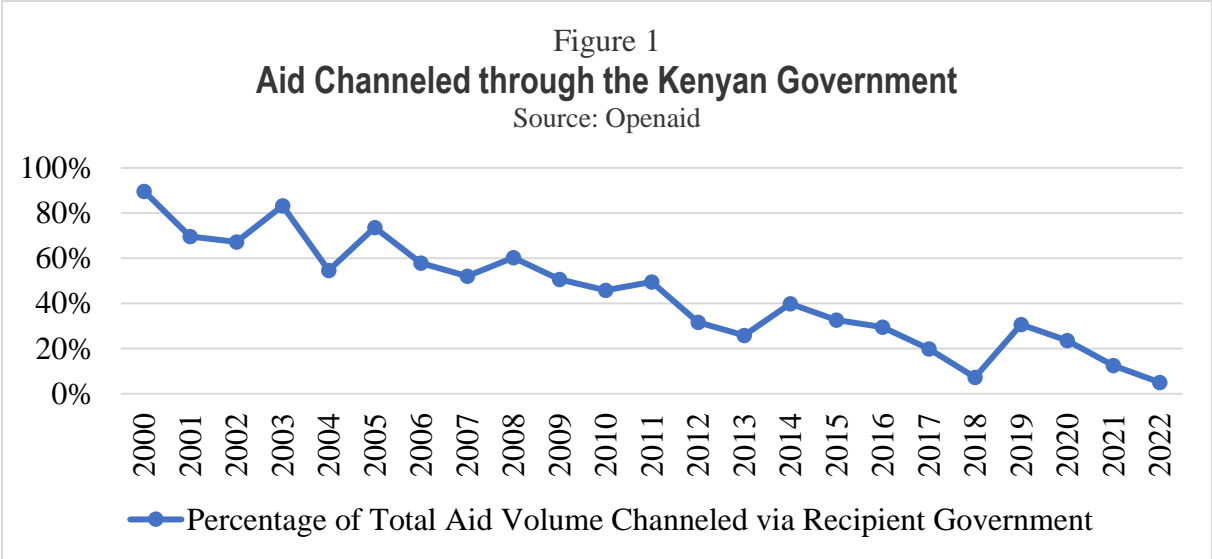
#### 5.1.1 Kenya

Figure 1 suggests that Sida has consistently reduced its development aid allocation through the Kenyan government, decreasing from 90% in 2000 to a mere 5% in 2022, indicating a persistent trend over time. Additionally, Figure 2 presents the V-Dem Democracy indexes indicating that the electoral aspect of Kenyan democracy is the most robust, followed by the deliberative, liberal, egalitarian, and participatory principles. These principles demonstrate similar patterns, as shown by Figure 2, with a significant increase between 2000 and 2003, followed by a stable level of democracy until 2007, and a noticeable decline in democratic levels until recovering to pre-2007 levels in 2012. Since then, there has been a modest upward trend in democratic levels.

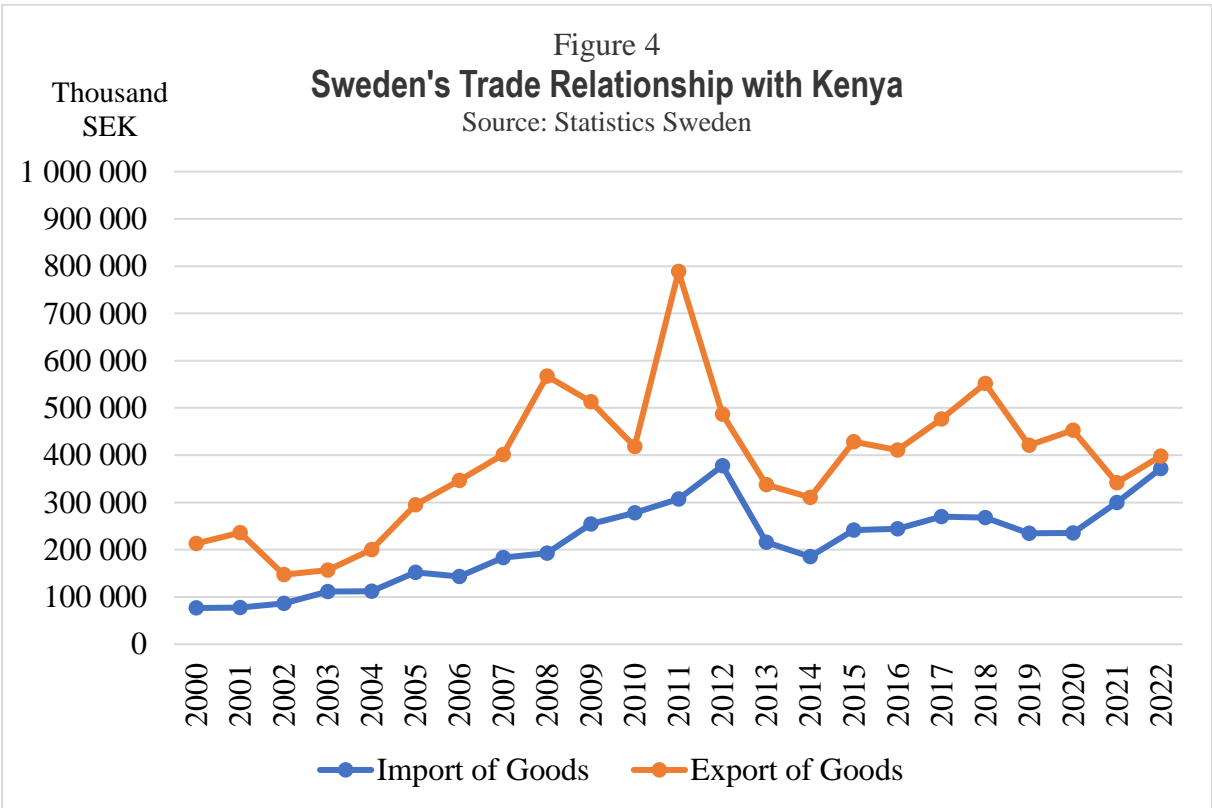
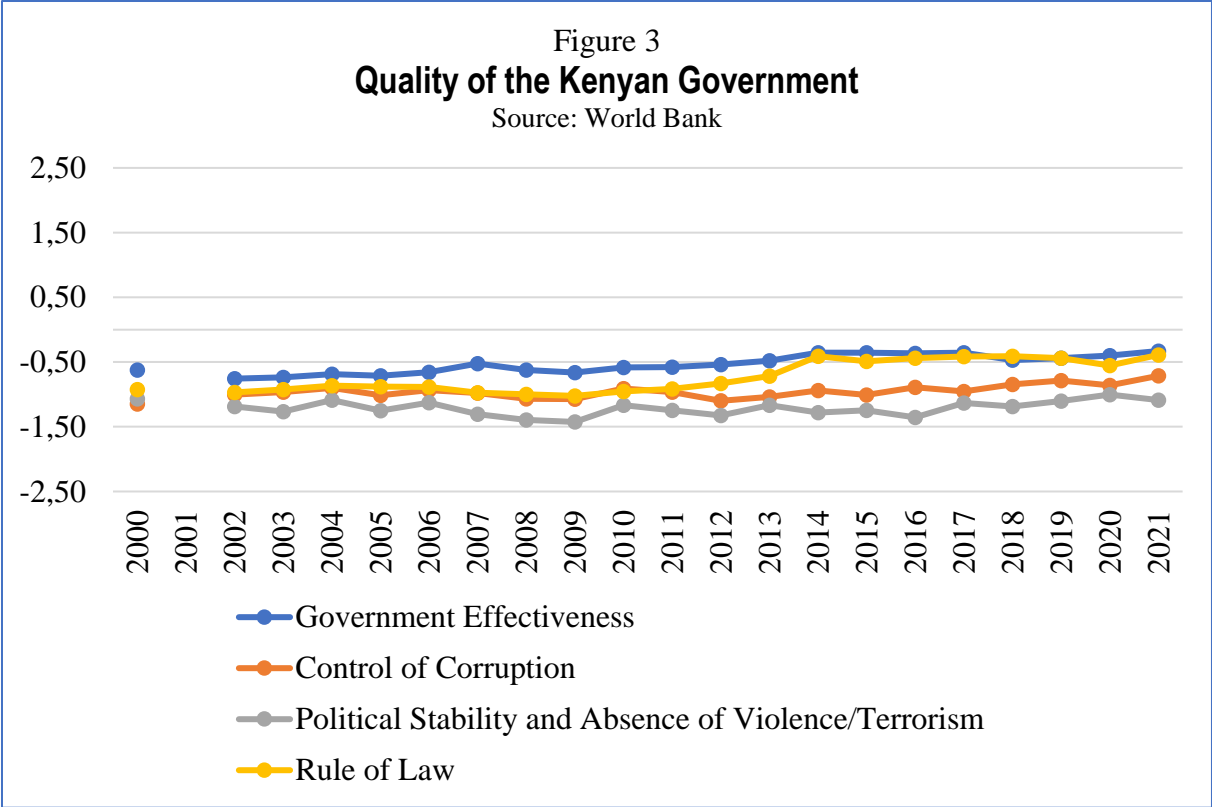
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<sup>2</sup> The appendix includes descriptive statistics for the remaining 32 countries but lacks contextual data on past country strategies. This deliberate approach was chosen to offer an initial data overview and maintain transparency in the selection process for the five countries of interest.

<sup>3</sup> The Y-axis scales vary between countries due to different trade relationships. To accurately depict trends, the Y-axis for countries like Tanzania and Bangladesh, which have substantial trade ties with Sweden, is set at 10 000 000 in thousand SEK. The Y-axis is set for other countries at 1 000 000 in thousand SEK. A uniform Y-axis scale for all countries would either hide the trends of the latter countries or cause the trends of Tanzania and Bangladesh to exceed the graph's limits.



Meanwhile, Figure 3 illustrates that the quality of the Kenyan government has remained relatively stable throughout the period of investigation, with the government's effectiveness consistently the strongest aspect, followed by its ability to uphold the rule of law, control corruption, and maintain political stability while reducing violence/terrorism. Finally, Figure 4 displays an increasing trade relationship between Kenya and Sweden from 2005 to 2013.



**5.1.1.1 Country Context of Kenya**

In 2012, the Swedish Agency for Development Evaluation (SADEV), a former Swedish agency responsible for reviewing and evaluating Swedish development cooperation, reported that

Sida's portfolio on democracy and human rights in Kenya has undergone significant changes over the years. Initially, during the 1990s, the focus was on civil society, but after the 2002 presidential elections, support was extended to both civil society and the government's reform program. Despite political tensions within the government, Sweden continued to support the reform program until the 2005 vote on the new constitution. However, changes in priorities led to an inability to implement the reform programs according to the original plan. After the violent unrest following the 2007 elections, Sweden redirected its support to civil society through the UN system (SADEV, 2012).

The Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs' decision documents for the development cooperation strategies with Kenya in 2016-2020 and 2021-2025 emphasize the importance of selecting partners and forms of cooperation that effectively contribute to sustainable outcomes. The documents underscore Sweden's focus on promoting the development of well-functioning public institutions, systems, and processes. With a longstanding track record of supporting state institutions, human rights defenders, and civil society in Kenya, Sweden is well-positioned to aid in strengthening democratic development and safeguarding human rights, as stated in the documents (Government of Sweden, 2016a; Government of Sweden, 2020a).

The 2016-2020 strategy document notes that general budget support is not yet relevant for the Kenyan government and that cooperation partners should be selected in a balanced manner. When partnering with the Kenyan government, a selective approach is preferred, prioritizing partners who are willing to lead and drive positive change in a responsible and inclusive manner. The 2021-2025 strategy also supports a selective approach based on effectiveness, but with a slightly more optimistic view toward the Kenyan government. The document asserts that the Kenyan government will be a critical agent of change and that circumstances are favorable for continued cooperation (Government of Sweden, 2016a; Government of Sweden, 2020a).

### **5.1.2 Tanzania**

Tanzania receives the highest proportion of development aid from Sida through state actors compared to all other 37 recipient countries. According to Figure 5, Sida consistently provided aid to the Tanzanian government, with the exception of 2014, when only 13 percent of the total aid was channeled through the government. This differs significantly from 2013, when 71% of the aid was channeled through the government, and 2015, when the figure increased to 77%.

In terms of democracy levels in Tanzania, Figure 6 indicates that electoral democracy is the strongest, followed by liberal, deliberate, egalitarian, and participatory principles. These principles show similar trends, with a modest increase in democracy levels in 2005 and a corresponding decrease a decade later in 2015.

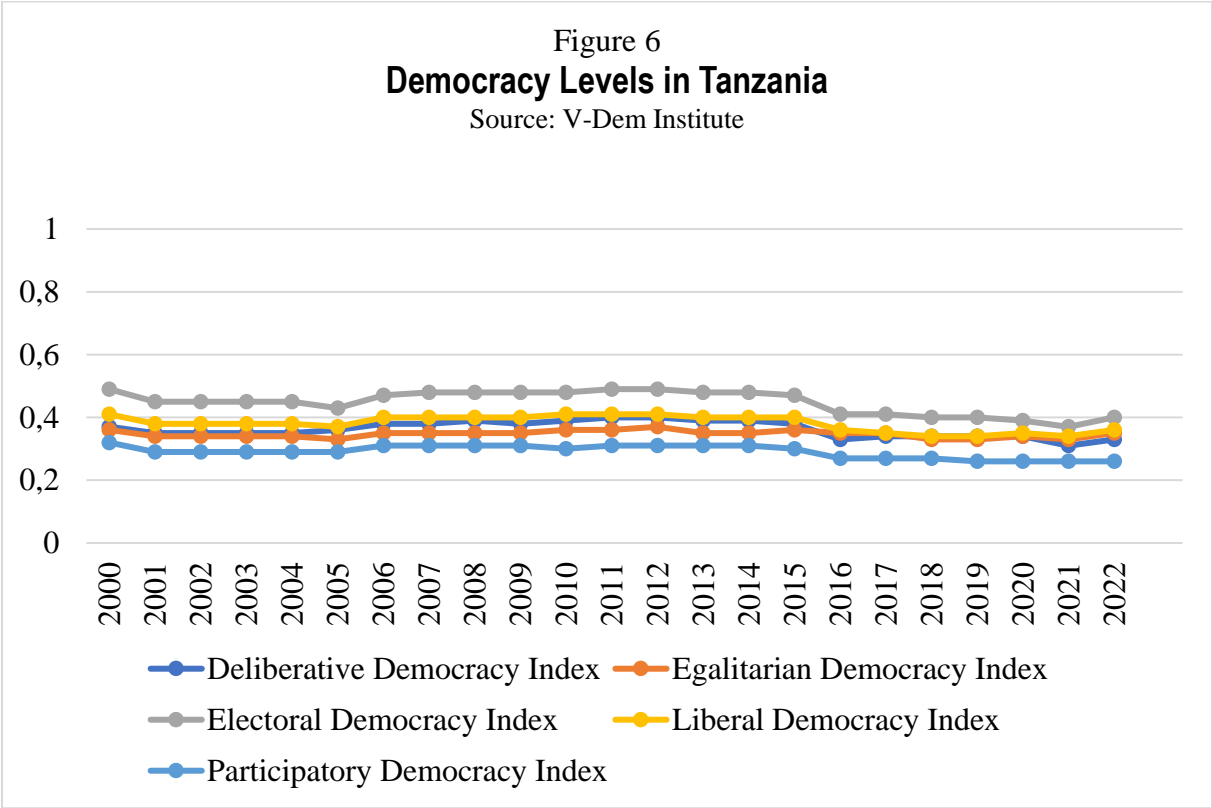
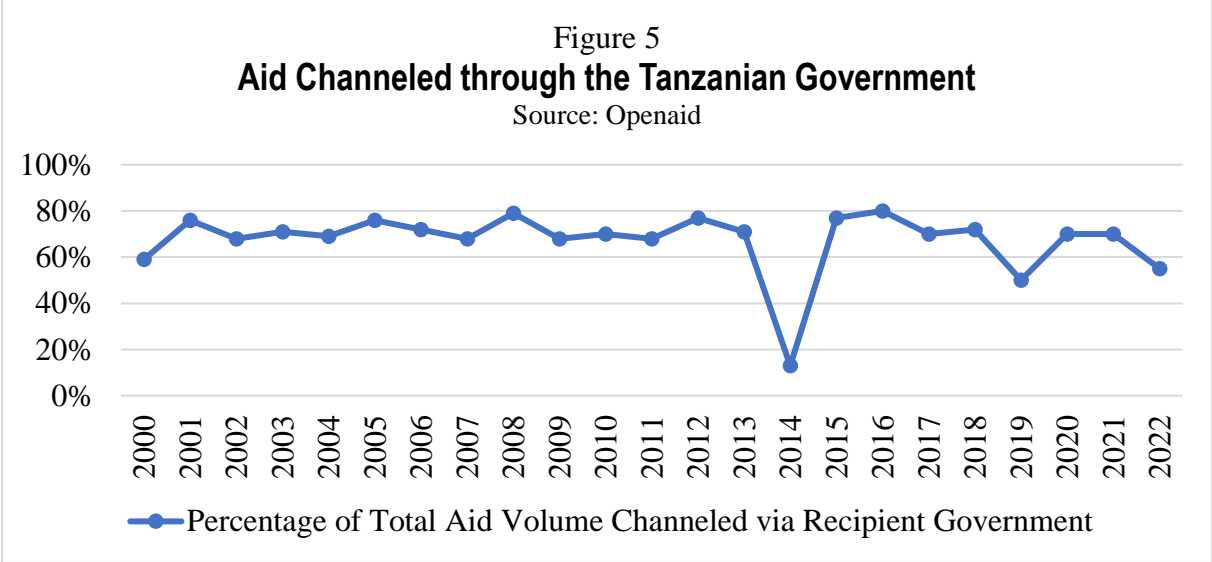
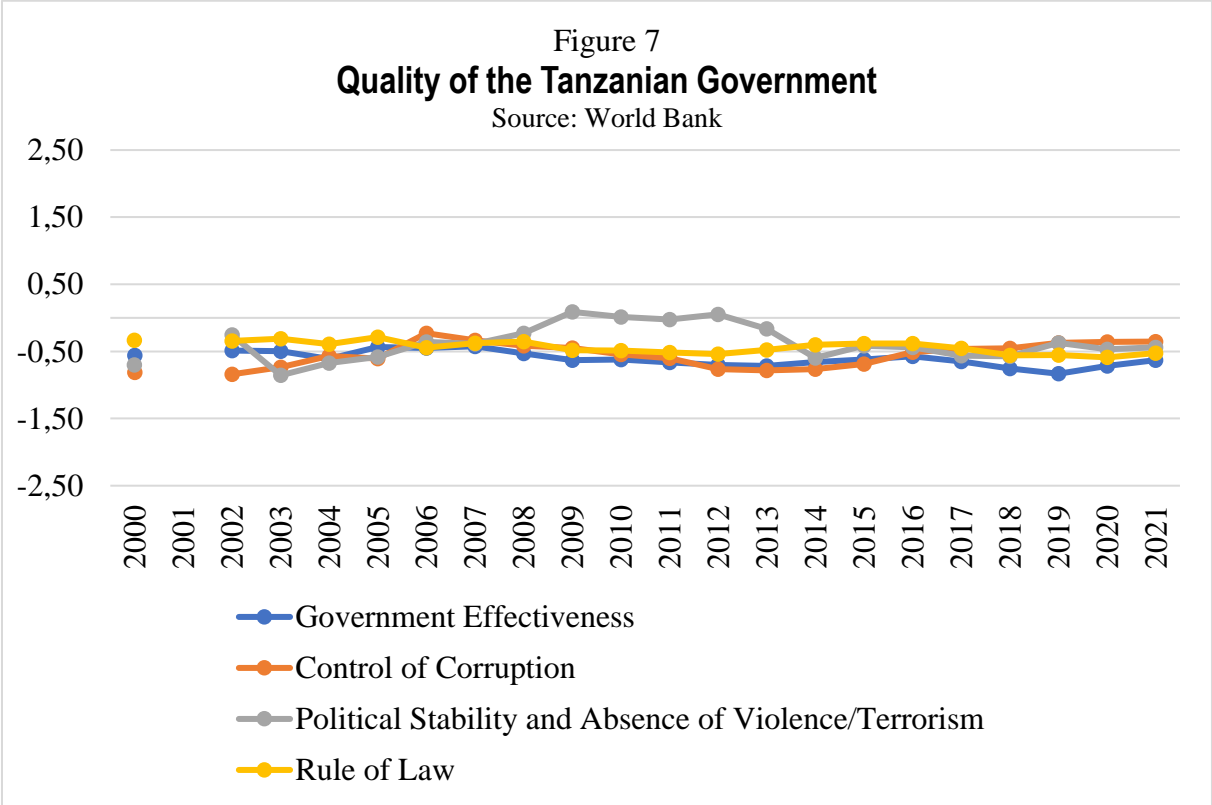
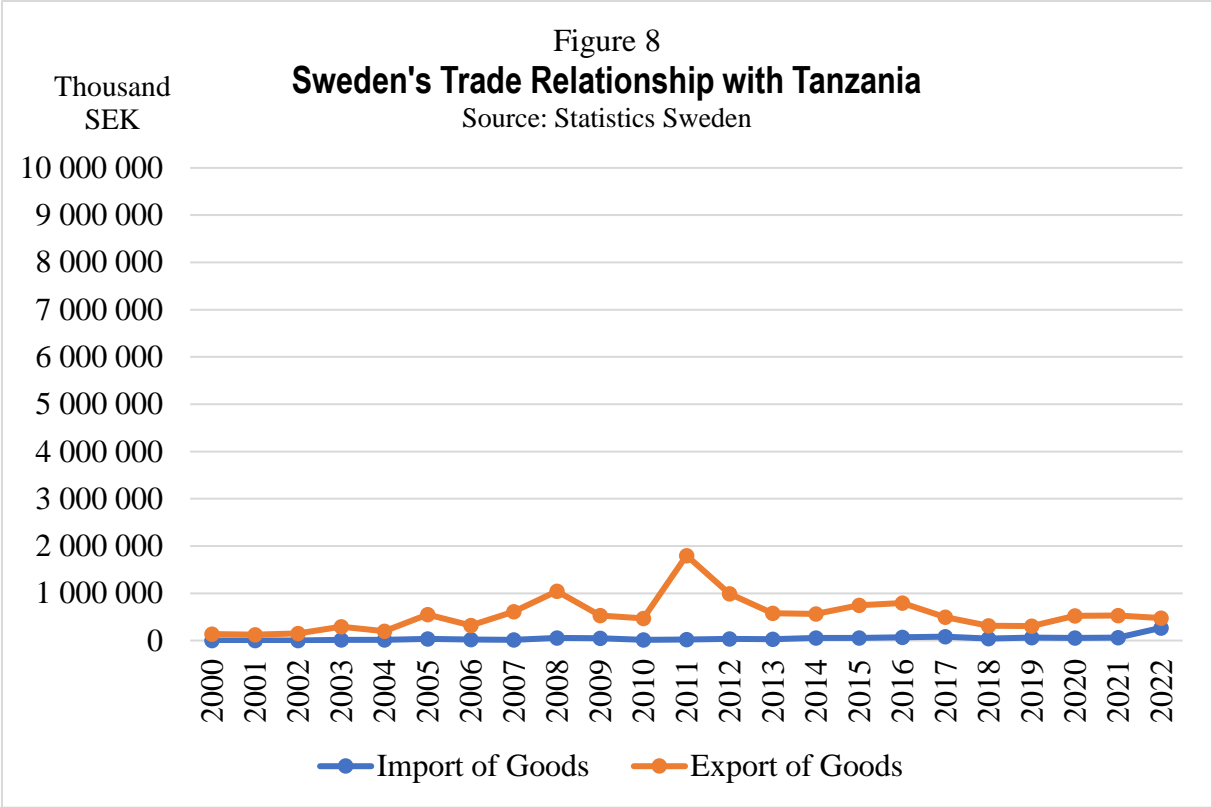


Figure 7 displays the quality of the Tanzanian government, revealing a significant improvement in political stability and a decrease in violence and terrorism in 2008. These stable levels persisted until 2013 when there was a noticeable decrease to similar levels as before.

Moving on to Figure 8, which illustrates comparable trends to those in Kenya, exhibiting an increase in the trade relationship between Sweden and Tanzania from 2005 to 2013. Although Sweden imported more goods from Kenya than Tanzania during this period, it exported a substantially larger amount to Tanzania while having a modest import of Tanzanian goods.





**5.1.2.1 Country Context of Tanzania**

Since the 2015 elections, Tanzania has experienced a decline in democratic space and human rights. Civil and political rights, such as freedom of expression, assembly, and association, have come under pressure, and the situation for LGBT people is difficult. Gender-based violence and sexual abuse against women and girls is a widespread problem, and discrimination against women and girls is reflected in higher unemployment rates, lower education levels, poorer access to financial services, and under-representation in decision-making processes (Government of Sweden, 2020b).

In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic further worsened the ability of many Tanzanians to lift themselves out of poverty. This was compounded by the shrinking of democratic space, which was further restricted during the general elections that took place in October 2020. The elections were not considered free, fair, credible, or transparent by the international community, and autocratic tendencies were strengthened, while the role of civil society and the media were greatly reduced (Government of Sweden, 2021a).

Given these concerning trends, the Swedish government has made significant changes to its strategy for Tanzania for the period 2020-2024 compared to previous strategies. These changes include a reduction in aid volume and a limited emphasis on state-to-state cooperation, guided by the former Swedish government’s foreign affairs policy to pursue a democratic-



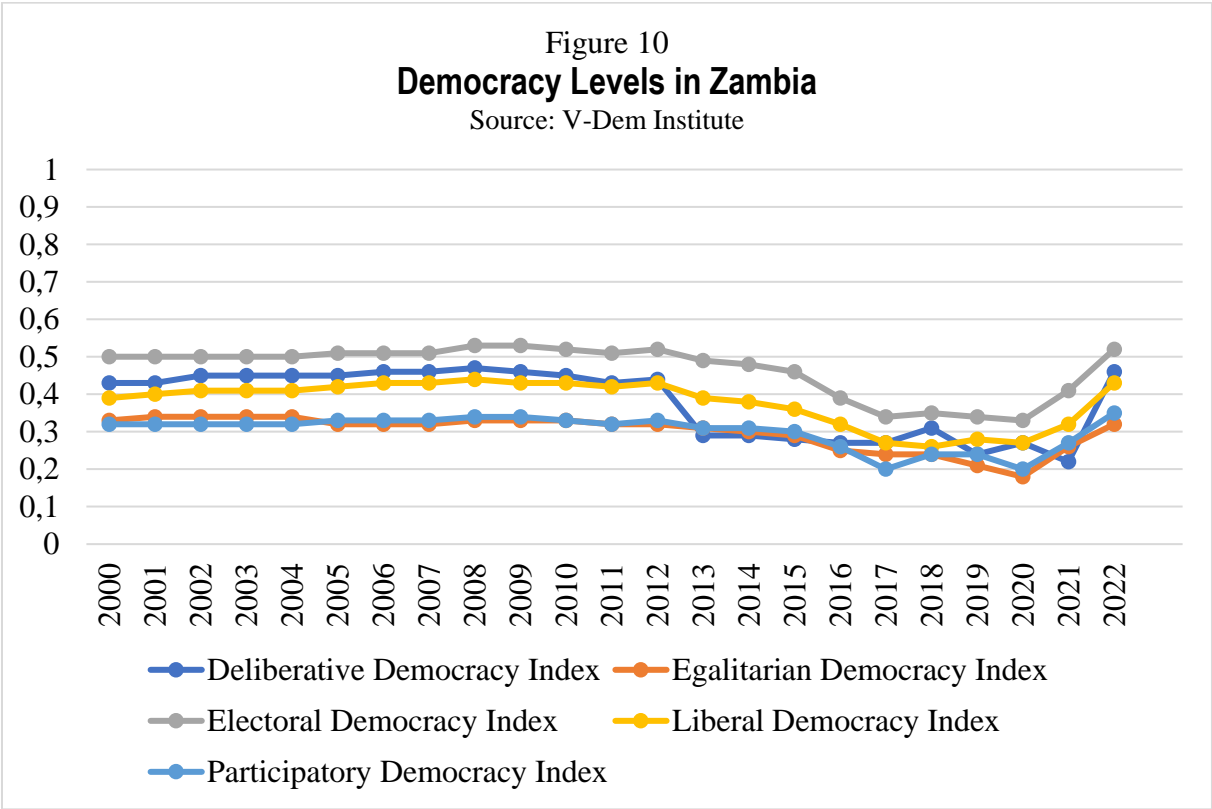
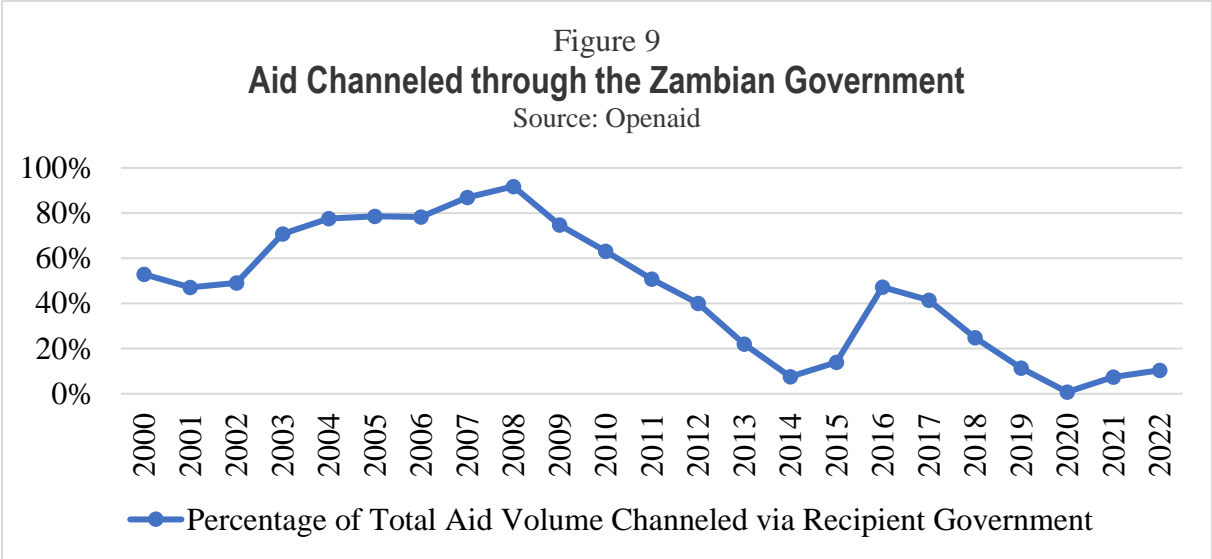
driven feministic foreign policy. The selective approach entails working alongside individuals within the government who desire and can promote greater respect for human rights (Government of Sweden, 2020b; Government of Sweden, 2020c; Government of Sweden, 2019a; Government of Sweden, 2021a).

Despite the decreasing level of Swedish state-to-state cooperation with the Tanzanian government, Tanzanian state actors have still received around 70% of the payments in 2021, as also seen in Figure 5. This is mainly because the Sida has provided extensive support to education and social security systems, where cooperation with and through state actors is necessary to achieve sustainable outcomes in the long term. However, regular assessments are made of the willingness and capacity of state actors to bring about change, in order to ensure relevant and effective support (Government of Sweden, 2022a; Government of Sweden, 2021a).

### **5.1.3 Zambia**

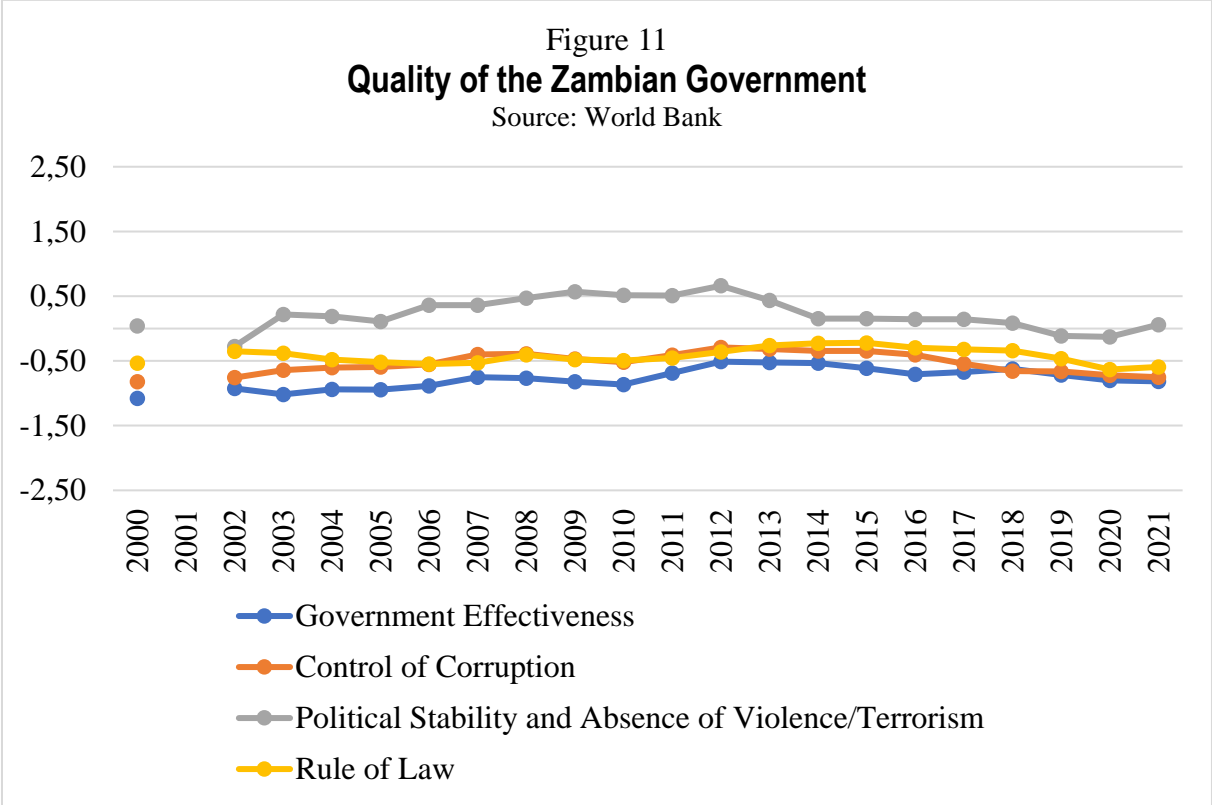
The data depicted in Figure 9 illustrates that Sida primarily directed its development aid through the Zambian government until 2008. Following this period, there was a gradual decline in aid allocation through state actors until 2014, when only 8% was channeled through the Zambian government. At this point, Sida altered its approach and increased its overall aid portfolio to state actors in Zambia to 47% by 2016. However, since 2016, Sida has again reduced its allocation through Zambian state actors.

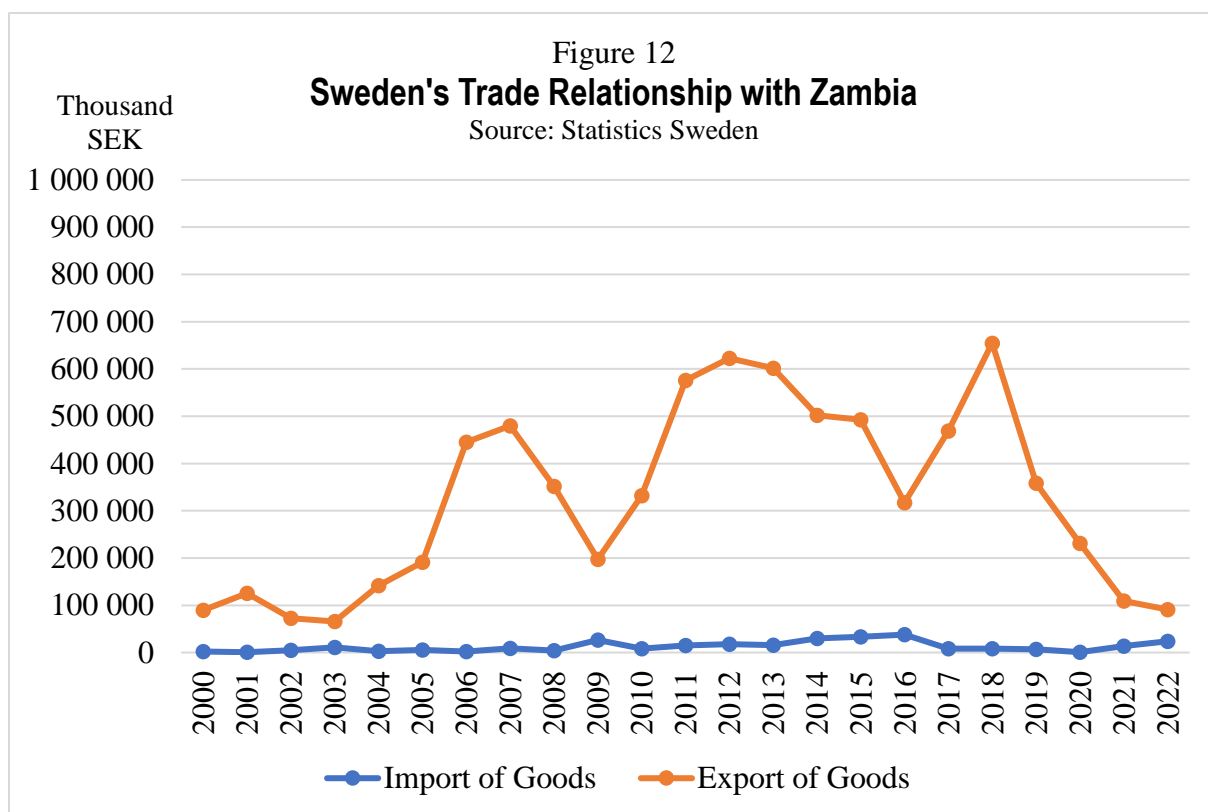
Figure 10 depicts that Zambia's democracy was relatively stable until 2012, with the highest adherence to electoral democracy principles, followed by deliberative, liberal, participatory, and egalitarian principles. However, in 2012, adherence to deliberative democracy principles significantly declined, and subsequently, the other principles also experienced a downward trend until 2020, when Zambia's democracy underwent a democratic recovery.



The data presented in Figure 11 suggests that the quality of the Zambian government has remained relatively stable over the investigation period. Compared to Kenya and Tanzania, Zambia has demonstrated remarkable political stability with low incidents of violence and terrorism for several years, until a decline was witnessed in 2012. The other aspects of the Zambian government's quality, such as the rule of law, control of corruption, and government effectiveness, have remained steady during the investigation period.

Moreover, Figure 12 highlights the trade relations between Sweden and Zambia. Like the case with Tanzania, Sweden did not receive any significant imports of goods from Zambia. Nevertheless, Sweden has exported goods to Zambia consistently from 2004 until 2020, with occasional declines observed in 2009 and 2016.





### 5.1.3.1 Country Context of Zambia

Sida's approach to its partnership with Zambia has undergone changes over the years, adapting to evolving circumstances and priorities. In the early 2000s, Sida noted positive developments in Zambia, including an increased commitment to poverty reduction, better public sector efficiency, and greater consultation and dialogue between Zambia and donors. Consequently, Sweden considered providing budget support to Zambia and prioritized financial management and governance capacity building for assistance. Sida believed the conditions were favorable to deepening the partnership and establishing a cooperation agreement based on mutual understanding, democratic values, and respect for human rights (Government of Sweden, 2003).

However, Zambia faced significant economic and democratic challenges in the following years, including corruption, misappropriation of funds, and a declining democratic space. Despite these difficulties, Sida identified opportunities for aid to generate positive results, as there was capacity and willingness among many different actors in Zambia to drive development forward. To address the risks posed by corruption, the Embassy of Sweden in Zambia emphasized implementing robust internal controls among its partners, including additional audits in significant health aid programs. The Embassy also developed a new anti-

corruption strategy and provided substantial support to the *Zambian National Audit Office* (Government of Sweden, 2015).

The selection of actors, the form of aid, and the program design were all guided by desired outcomes, with a focus on performance management of its activities. During the 2013-2017 strategy period, aid was primarily directed towards independent organizations, the private sector, and the UN system, but after assessing government capacity and internal controls, the Sida concluded that providing some support to the government is appropriate, but it requires close monitoring of outcomes (Government of Sweden, 2015).

Recently, Sida has emphasized prioritizing strategic areas and interventions that have significant catalytic effects to create added value. This includes supporting actors who demand respect for human rights from the state, as well as assisting the state in fulfilling these commitments and promoting an open and democratic society. Sida has also placed significant emphasis on fostering more democratic accountability and contributing to creating conditions conducive to this goal (Government of Sweden, 2019b).

Sweden's normative influence is strong and widely respected in Zambia, particularly in the areas of gender equality and human rights. Swedish aid is highly regarded for its flexibility, long-term focus, and adherence to principles of development effectiveness, such as ownership and core support. However, as seen in Figure 9, there has been a gradual shift away from direct state-to-state cooperation towards partnerships with non-state actors, reflecting the changing circumstances and priorities in Zambia (Government of Sweden, 2019b).

## **5.2 Asian Countries**

### **5.2.1 Bangladesh**

As depicted in Figure 13, the proportion of Sida's total aid allocated through state actors rose from 2% in 2004 to 66% in 2008. However, from 2009 onwards, Sida began to reduce its development aid through state actors, and by 2016, no aid was allocated to state actors in Bangladesh. In Figure 14, it is evident that democracy in Bangladesh declined significantly in 2007, but then showed a democratic recovery to similar levels by 2009. The principle of electoral democracy was found to be the most robust in Bangladesh, surpassing other principles that had similar scores and patterns throughout the investigation period.

Figure 13  
**Aid Channeled through the Bangladeshi Government**

Source: Openaid

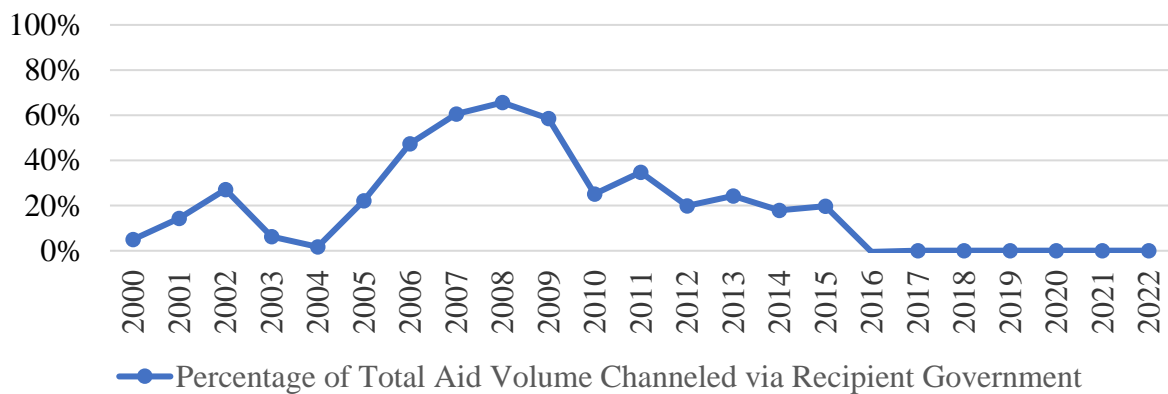
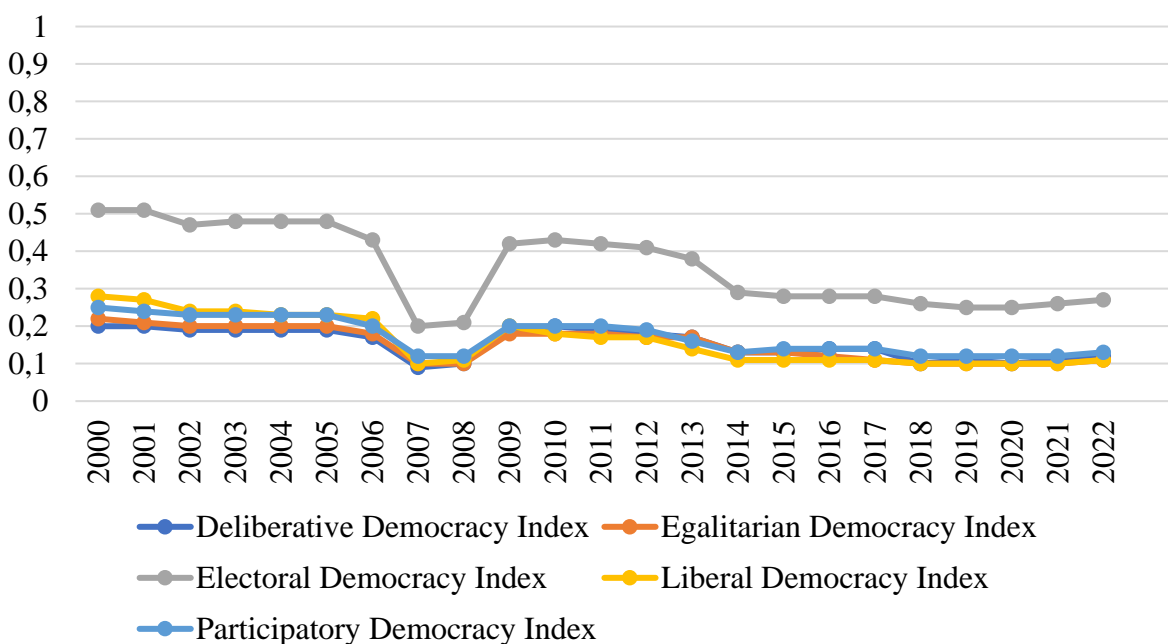


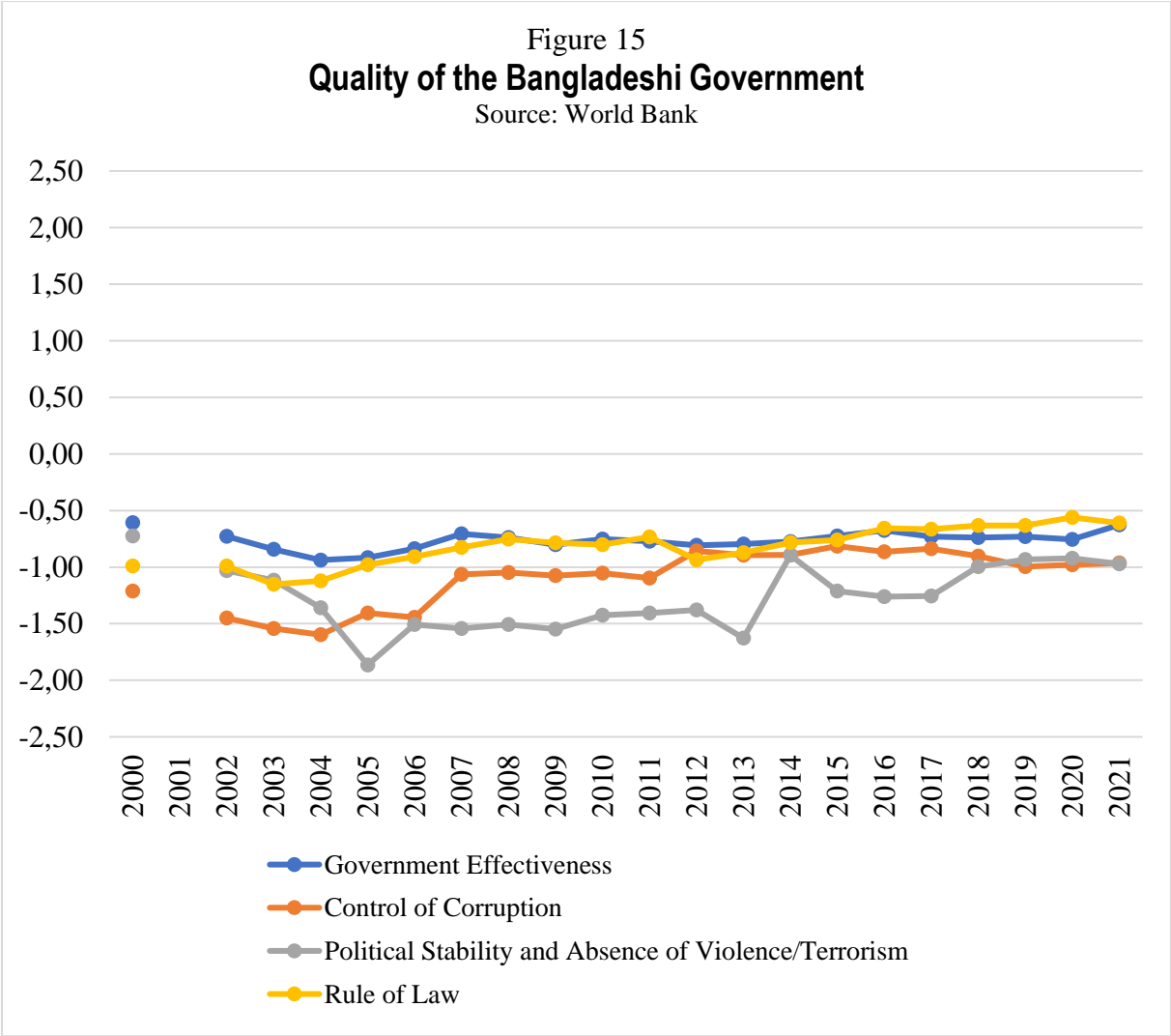
Figure 14  
**Democracy Levels in Bangladesh**

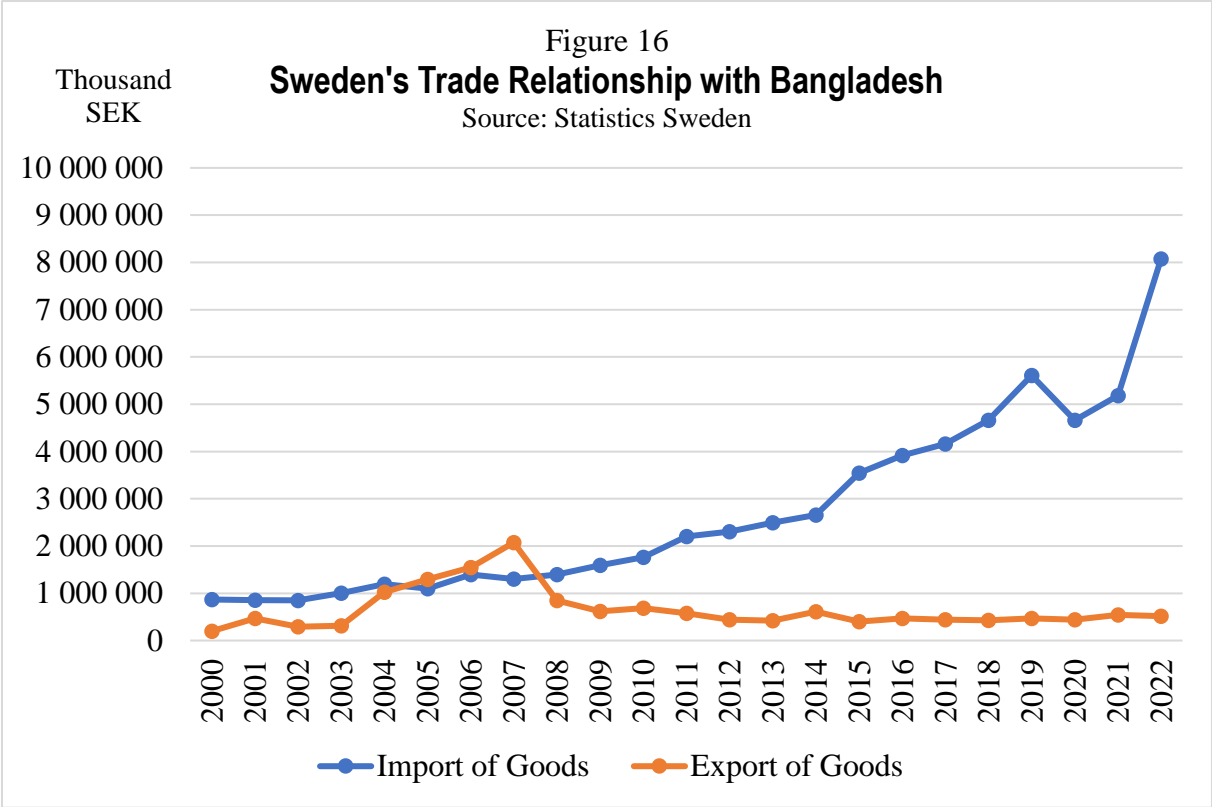
Source: V-Dem Institute



In Figure 15, it is evident that the level of political stability and violence in Bangladesh has been relatively volatile over the years. For instance, there was a significant decline in 2005 and 2013, as well as an increase in 2014. This aspect of the measures that gauges the quality of the Bangladeshi government has consistently scored poorly over the years. On the other hand, the rule of law and government effectiveness have been more stable, while the control of corruption, which initially had the lowest score according to the World Bank, has modestly improved since 2006.

In contrast to the Sub-Saharan African countries examined earlier, Figure 16 shows that imports have been increasing while exports have been decreasing in the trade relationship between Sweden and Bangladesh. This figure indicates that the trade between the two countries is heavily dominated by the import of Bangladeshi goods to Sweden, which has significantly increased over the years.





**5.2.1.1 Country Context of Bangladesh**

Between 2007 and 2009, Bangladesh underwent a significant shift in its democratic landscape, as depicted in Figure 14. This change was brought about by the establishment of an interim government with military support, which went beyond the constitutional mandate of a caretaker government. However, the objective was to tackle corruption, enhance the judiciary's independence, and reform the election commission, all of which were long-standing international demands. While these efforts resulted in progress toward promoting a more stable democracy and enhanced governance, the state of emergency during this period restricted fundamental freedoms and rights, thereby creating a challenging situation for bilateral development cooperation (Government of Sweden, 2008a).

In recent years, there has been a decline in the development of democratic values, human rights, and the rule of law in Bangladesh. Restrictions on freedom of expression, increased political violence, and reduced space for civil society have been observed. Corruption, weak institutions, politicized processes, and an inefficient bureaucracy continue to hinder good governance, making it challenging for public institutions to uphold the rule of law (Government of Sweden, 2022b; Government of Sweden, 2020d).



Sweden's strategy from 2014 to 2020 emphasized the use of partners and forms of cooperation that could effectively contribute to achieving long-term sustainable results. Innovative forms of cooperation and financing, including results-based aid, were encouraged. However, the strategy recognized the extensive corruption in Bangladesh and the associated risks, which must be managed in aid design. Ongoing conflict analysis and a conflict-sensitive approach were also deemed necessary in development cooperation, given the recurring conflicts linked to political polarization, religion, natural resources, and climate and environmental issues (Government of Sweden, 2020e).

Multilateral organizations such as the World Bank, NGOs, and national civil society organizations dominated Sweden's 2014-20 strategy portfolio, with limited support for public institutions and direct cooperation with public authorities in Bangladesh. Given negative developments in human rights, democracy, and the rule of law, the strategy envisioned limited cooperation with the Bangladeshi state. However, cooperation with change agents within the state who could contribute to respect for democracy, human rights, and the rule of law was considered possible (Government of Sweden, 2016b; Government of Sweden, 2021b; Government of Sweden, 2020d).

Sweden's 2021-25 strategy does not anticipate any direct agreements with the Bangladeshi state due to bureaucratic obstacles within the government. Instead, interagency cooperation involving state actors mainly takes place through the UN. UN organizations are considered to have a high capacity in reaching people living in poverty and conduct important policy and normative work according to the strategy. Direct support for NGOs is prioritized within the areas of democracy, human rights, gender equality, anti-corruption, transparency, and accountability. The strategy also highlights that efforts will be made to engage private sector actors, as they play a crucial role in Bangladesh's development (Government of Sweden, 2022b).

### **5.2.2 Cambodia**

Figure 17 illustrates the percentage of aid provided by Sida to state actors in Cambodia over a period of time. The data indicates that Swedish aid to Cambodian state actors increased from 6% in 2001 to 40% in 2006. However, between 2007 and 2010, Sida did not allocate significant aid through Cambodian state actors. In 2011, the percentage of aid allocated through the Cambodian government increased significantly to 54%, which then gradually decreased until 2017 to 37%. Thereafter, the decline in aid allocation accelerated, reaching 0% in 2021.

The graph presented in Figure 18 clearly indicates that Cambodia's level of democracy has remained consistent over time. However, when compared to Bangladesh, Cambodia scored lower on most of the principles assessed by the V-Dem Institute. The electoral principle is considered the strongest in Cambodia, although it has experienced a decline since 2016. The participatory principle, on the other hand, has steadily gained strength since 2001. However, the deliberative principle, which previously held the second spot, experienced a decline in 2010 and has since then continued to decline, following similar patterns as the electoral principle. The scores for both the egalitarian and liberal principles were almost identical in the V-Dem indexes, representing the lowest scores for Cambodia.

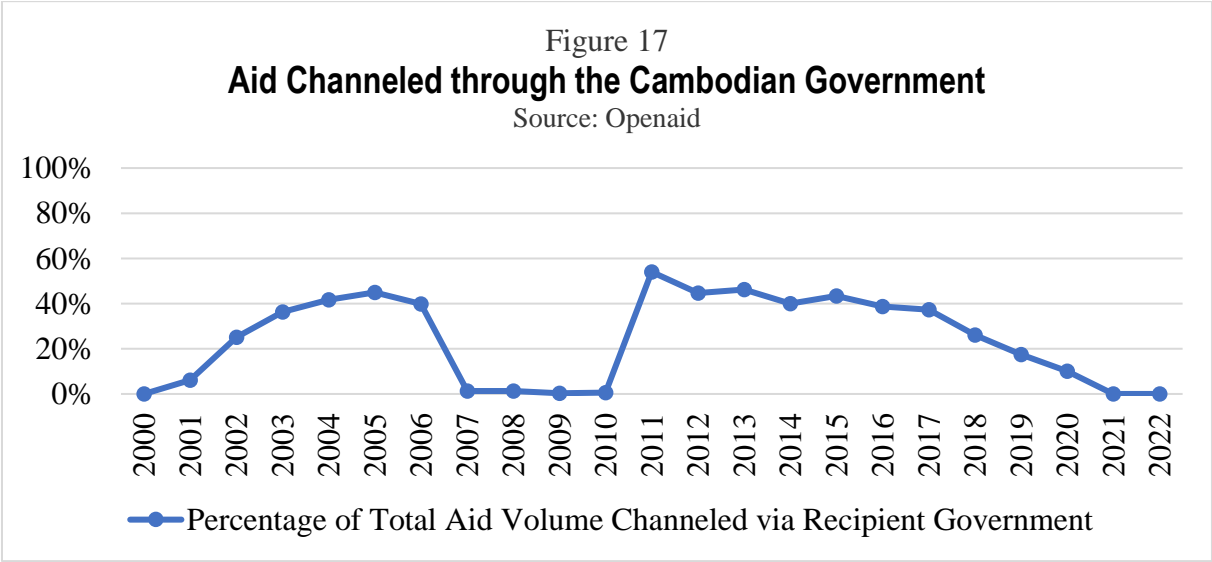
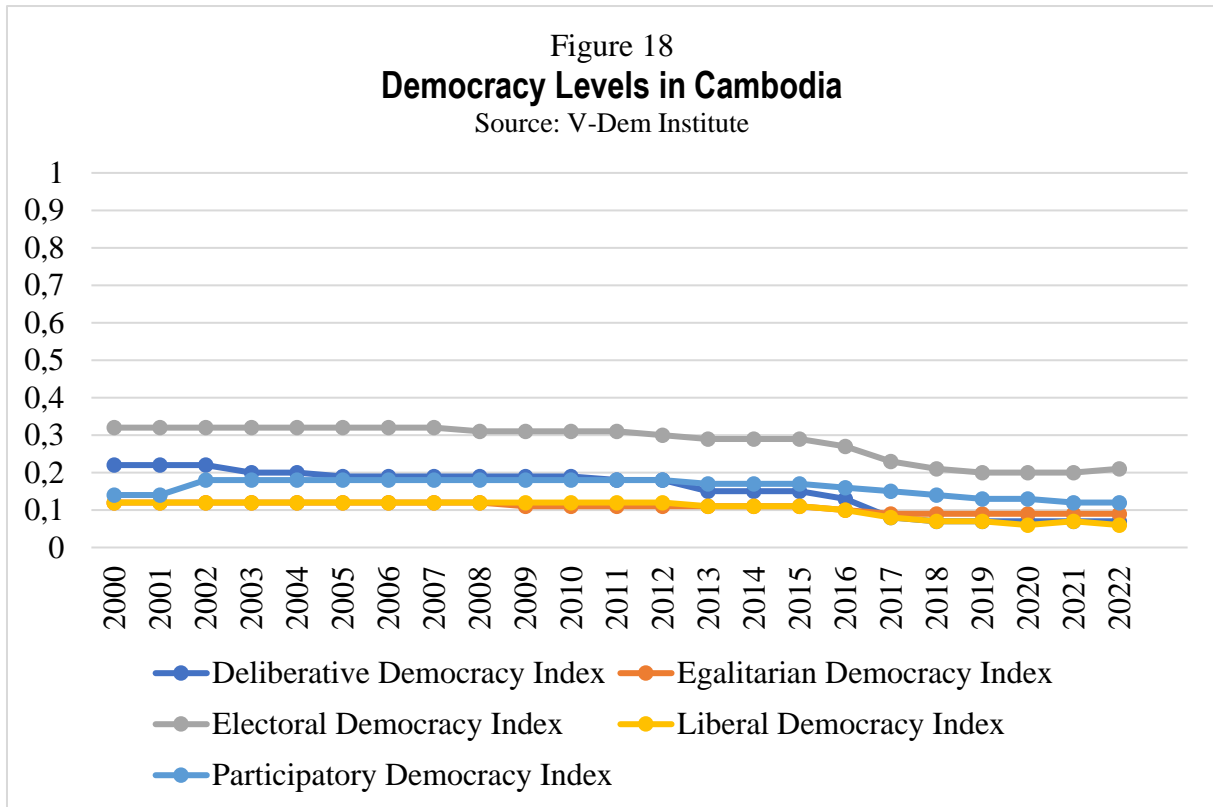
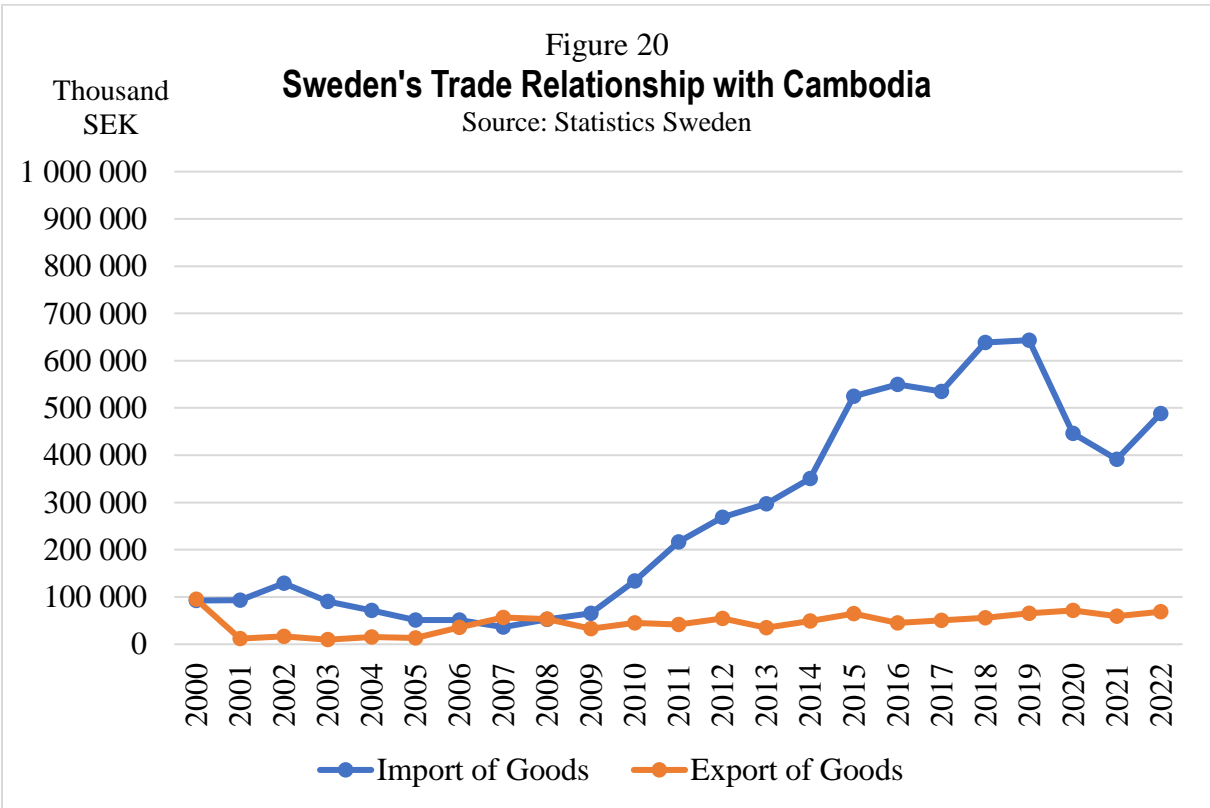
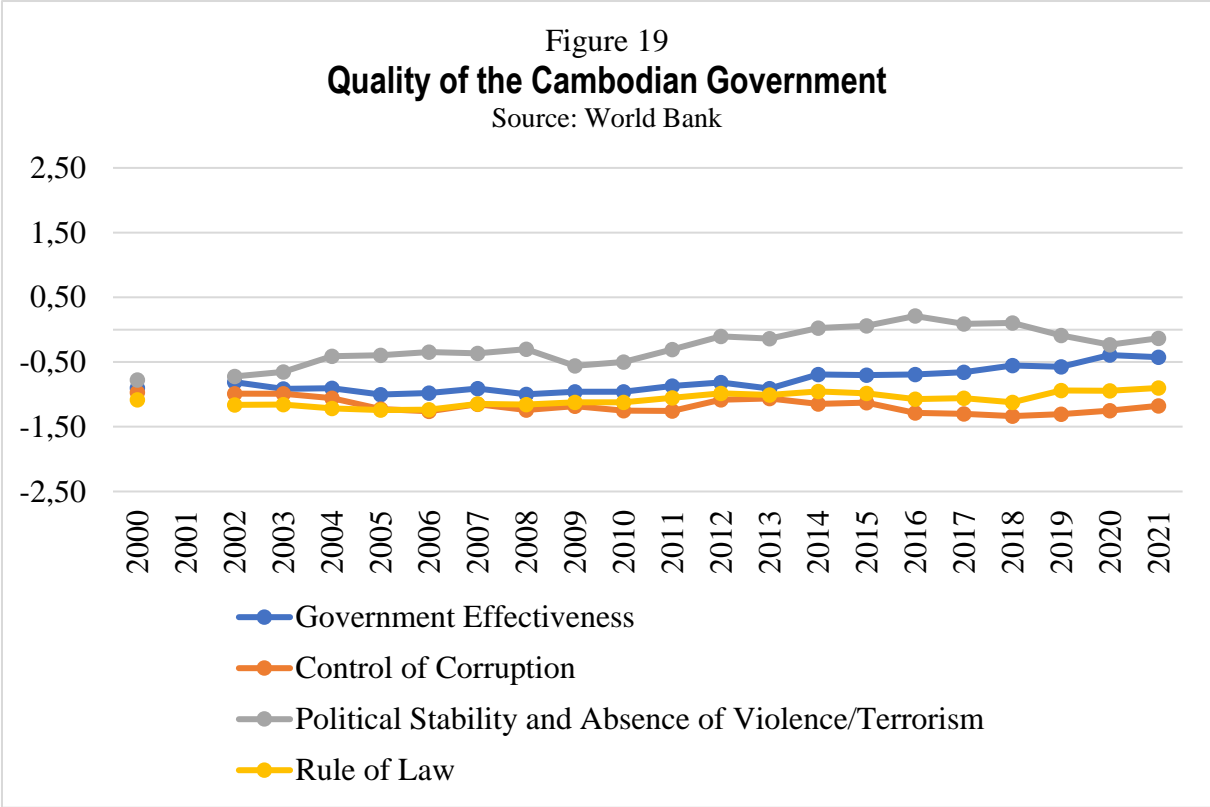


Figure 18  
**Democracy Levels in Cambodia**  
 Source: V-Dem Institute



In terms of government quality in Cambodia, most measures from the World Bank's Worldwide Governance Indicators, illustrated in Figure 19, show a modest increase. The strongest measure, political stability and absence of violence and terrorism, is followed by government effectiveness and the rule of law, all of which demonstrate similar patterns. However, the control of corruption is the only measure that shows the opposite pattern, exhibiting a modest but steady decrease over time.

In Figure 20, it can be observed that Cambodia has a similar trade pattern with Sweden as Bangladesh, with no significant level of Swedish goods exported to Cambodia but a notable increase in the import of Cambodian goods to Sweden. However, it is worth mentioning that the amount of Bangladeshi goods imported to Sweden is significantly higher than that of Cambodian goods.



**5.2.2.1 Country Context of Cambodia**

Cambodia's progress toward democratization has been slow, and it has been hampered by decades of civil war, leaving weak institutions and widespread poverty in its wake. Sida's

previous strategy periods witnessed inconsistent progress in human rights and democracy, inadequate legal reform, limited freedom of expression, and vulnerable political opposition. Corruption remains a significant obstacle to development, but anti-corruption measures have been implemented. Environmental degradation is also a concern due to impunity and legal uncertainty, exacerbated by unequal access to natural resources. Therefore, a functioning legal system is essential for inclusive development (Government of Sweden, 2008b).

Sida has assessed that progress towards the goals of their strategies for development cooperation with Cambodia has stagnated since political changes began in 2017. The dissolution of the main opposition party and subsequent political repression have reduced the space for civil society to operate, leading to a reduction in freedom of expression. As a result, the Swedish government decided to discontinue Sweden's bilateral strategy for development cooperation with Cambodia for the period 2014-2018 (extended until 2020) and modify the strategy for Sweden's regional development cooperation in Asia and Oceania 2016-2021, with a focus on human rights, democracy, and the rule of law in Cambodia. As of 2021, both the long-term development cooperation strategy with Cambodia and the related financial allocation were determined to be terminated (Government of Sweden, 2022c; Government of Sweden, 2021c).

Sida's contribution to change during the phase-out period needs to be seen from three perspectives: the goals and expectations of the results strategy, the increasing political repression since 2017, and the effects of the global COVID-19 pandemic on Cambodian society. Prior to 2017, Sida's theory of change was based on supporting institutions and structures required for a functioning democracy, and initiatives that directly strengthen citizens' knowledge, ability, and opportunity to participate in society, hold those in power accountable and demand their rights. However, given the change in the democratic situation in 2017, Sida's theory of change was also affected, and the potential for changes in the overall direction of reform via the government was deemed to be very limited (Government of Sweden, 2022c).

As a result, Sida's approach shifted towards supporting civil society, education, and environment/climate. Swedish aid to Cambodia had only a few agreements directly with state actors from 2018, and support to civil society increased to strengthen advocacy work on the state and support in education and environment/climate. Cooperation in human rights and environment and climate was largely channeled through NGOs and the UN, and Sida's efforts contributed to maintaining transparency in society even during periods of increased control (Government of Sweden, 2022c).

### 5.3 Contextualizing the Descriptive Data

The descriptive data presented in the previous sections plays a vital role as prima facie evidence of observed trends. It serves as a guide for identifying the country cases and selecting country and subject-specific experts to interview. Equally significant, this data enables the reader to comprehend the context in which the interviewees from the five chosen countries share their experiences. It sheds light on the challenges, contextual issues, and Sida's historical involvement in these countries. Without this background, readers would lack the necessary information to interpret the interviewees' perspectives.

To summarize, in Cambodia, Sida initially focused on supporting institutions and empowering citizens to establish a functioning democracy. However, due to limited progress in government reform and political changes, Sida shifted its support towards civil society, education, and environmental initiatives. Sida terminated its strategy and financial allocation for Cambodia in 2021, due to limited progress and political repression. In Bangladesh, Sida recognized the decline in democratic values and human rights, considering direct cooperation with the government risky due to corruption. Instead, Sida relied on multilateral organizations, NGOs, and civil society to address these issues.

In Kenya, Sida's strategy evolved over time. Initially, the focus was on supporting civil society, but after the 2007 elections, Sida redirected its support through the UN system. Tanzania has experienced a decline in democratic space and human rights since the 2015 elections, leading to significant changes in Sida's strategy. The Swedish government reduced aid volume and shifted emphasis away from state-to-state cooperation. Instead, they adopted a selective approach, working with individuals within the government who promote greater respect for human rights.

Despite the decrease in state-to-state cooperation, Tanzanian state actors still receive substantial payments, particularly in areas like education and social security, where cooperation with the government is necessary for sustainable outcomes. Lastly, in Zambia, Sida initially considered providing budget support and prioritized financial management and governance capacity building. Despite economic and democratic challenges, Sida identified opportunities for aid to generate positive results by implementing internal controls to address corruption risks. However, there has been a shift away from direct state-to-state cooperation towards partnerships with non-state actors.

Overall, the lack of transparency in Sida's decision-making process raises questions about the considerations guiding their choices in selecting cooperation partners. It is challenging to understand why certain operations, sectors, partners, and forms of aid were chosen over others. For instance, the decision to provide more state-to-state cooperation to Tanzania, despite lower scores in terms of government quality and democracy compared to Zambia, warrants investigation into the actual considerations Sida considers when selecting aid recipients in countries with struggling democracies.

## 6. Results and Analysis

This chapter presents the findings from the nine semi-structured interviews conducted as part of this study. A thematic analysis approach was employed, revealing three primary themes along with their respective subthemes: understanding external factors, addressing challenges in selecting aid recipients, and overcoming obstacles in terminating partnerships. It is worth noting that the first theme, external factors, will be collectively examined due to its complementary and overarching role in exploring the decision-making process. Most subthemes are analyzed within the context of the chosen aid recipients, as this theme constitutes the primary focus of this study.

### 6.1 External Factors

As noted in the descriptive data chapter, Sida has placed great importance on reducing state-to-state cooperation with recipient countries over the past decades. Many respondents have acknowledged this trend, pointing out that an increasing number of government strategies explicitly state that Sida should avoid partnering with state actors in recipient countries. This is often justified by the recipient country's insufficient commitment to *democracy* and human rights (PS).

As per many respondents, a key reason for the decrease in direct funding to state actors is thus the global rise of repressive governments, limited *democratic* environments, and the shrinking *democratic* space for NGOs worldwide (PS, HUA, HMENA). While many respondents acknowledge the advantages of collaborating with state actors, Sida has placed greater emphasis on evaluating the associated risks.

*Ideally, we aim to work with recipient governments who demonstrate strong ownership, to support long-term institutional capacity building and system strengthening. However, due to the fragility of many countries we work in, it is often difficult to enter into a direct agreement with the government (HUA).*

Sida is thus operating in a more *complex* environment compared to the past, as further emphasized by HUA.

*In the past, Sida collaborated with relatively stable countries such as South Africa, Namibia, and Botswana. However, Sida has now redirected its focus towards working with considerably more fragile nations (HUA).*



Operating in fragile environments poses challenges for aid officials due to their *complex* nature. Therefore, aid officials need to adopt an adaptable approach that recognizes and embraces the complexity, uncertainty, and distinct aspects of each problem they encounter (Ramalingam et al., 2014). The *complex* and uncertain nature of fragile states could be seen to give rise to wicked problems, which require Sida to adjust its aid delivery strategies. This adjustment is necessary not only in response to challenges such as a decline in democratic governance in recipient countries but also when positive advancements occur. In such cases, as shown above, funding may be discontinued for countries that have made significant socio-economic progress, with priority given to countries with more urgent development needs.

During the interview, it was mentioned that Sida uses the Multidimensional Poverty Analysis (MDPA) as an initial step to implement government strategies. This involves identifying sectors and potential collaboration partners. Based on this statement, one can argue that Sida has robust systems in place to consider the complexities of the recipient country.

*The Multidimensional Poverty Analysis (MDPA) is a semi-scientific product that employs evidence and data to comprehend the dimensions of poverty in a country. This includes understanding issues of power, identifying who is poor and why they are poor, and determining what is lacking or failing in order to help people leave poverty behind. By doing this, Sida can identify which sectors to focus on to contribute to reducing poverty, as well as the actors who are most likely to deliver the desired outcomes that will translate into poverty reduction (PS).*

Furthermore, the interviews revealed a significant recognition of the "complexity" associated with international development cooperation. However, the complex issues raised did not fully align with the concept established in the Theoretical Framework. For instance, according to MELS, complexity in development cooperation arises from the involvement of multiple actors, including those within the partner country, influential donor actors such as the World Bank, the UN system, and other donor governments that wield considerably greater influence than Sweden. This understanding of complexity complements the concept outlined in the Theoretical Framework, as it introduces an additional layer of complexity by highlighting the need for Sida to navigate both the wicked problems encountered in recipient countries and the geopolitical dynamics of donor coordination.

As emphasized by several respondents in the interviews, it is crucial to place special importance on donor coordination. For instance, MELS argues that Sida cannot simply choose the most logical intervention or sector on its own, as donor coordination resembles a

marketplace where allocations are determined through political negotiations among donors, and where there are ongoing discussions taking place at the country level. Thus, the geopolitical dynamics of donor coordination influence the sector in which Sida will intervene. This finding is particularly important to consider, as several participants highlighted that the sector in which Sida intervenes in a country has a significant impact on the type of actor who receives Sida's development aid. An example of this can be found in the interview with HDCT.

*It's important to take a closer look at what exactly we are funding. As it turns out, the majority of the funding actually goes towards two specific programs: one to support education and the other to improve the social insurance system through a social safety net program. Now, according to assessments carried out by Sida, the Swedish Embassy in Tanzania, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Stockholm, working with government actors is really the only way to achieve our objectives when it comes to these sectors (HDCT).*

This highlights that the appropriateness of a partner is heavily influenced by the specific sector Sida aims to focus on. Thus, the geopolitical dynamics of donor coordination impact the sectors prioritized by Sida, which in turn determines the kind of partners Sida collaborates with.

Another noteworthy observation that arose from the interviews was the change in aid modality, where there has been a decrease in the use of mechanisms such as budget support or sector support, which were more likely to target state actors in recipient countries (PS, SAS, HUA). SAS argues that Sida focused more on elected governments that were oriented towards development, with values that were somewhat balanced with Sida's values. This approach allowed Sida to establish trust and utilize budget support as a cooperation tool, although this has become less common recently (SAS). This change was also remarked on by HMENA:

*About 15 years ago, we still believed that budget support was an efficient way to provide development assistance, but concerns about the lack of control over how the funds were used led to a change in perception. This shift reflects the perception that illegitimate governments are not reliable partners for implementing development cooperation (HMENA).*

These findings showcase a change of perception that can be attributed to the *increased risk awareness* among Swedish decision-makers and the desire for the appropriate use of their funds, with the practice of budget support to recipient governments making it challenging to achieve this goal.

## 6.2 Choice of Aid Recipient

### 6.2.1 Risk awareness

The interviews provide strong evidence that Swedish politicians and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs must find a balance between promoting effective development cooperation in fragile countries and being transparent and accountable to Swedish taxpayers regarding how their tax money is used. As a result, taking the risks to fund state actors in fragile states is not viewed as favorable. This in turn guides Sida's operations.

The recognition of using Swedish tax money in an appropriate and responsible manner emerged as a crucial factor during the interviews. This concept was underscored by several participants, including SAS, HMENA, and HDCR, who highlighted its influence on the selection process of aid recipients. In particular, HDCR noted that this perception has significantly influenced the behavior of Swedish politicians and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, leading them to adopt a more cautious approach towards risk and avoid state-to-state cooperation.

*I believe one reason why we are working less with government actors is that Sweden, including the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and the Minister for International Development Cooperation, has become more risk averse. This is particularly evident when we work directly with governments, especially in countries where democracy may be problematic. It seems that politicians, and therefore the Ministry [referring to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs] itself, are more concerned about the potential risk of how Swedish taxpayers perceive Swedish development aid (HDCR).*

Thus, this suggests that Swedish politicians' aversion to risks strongly affects the aid recipient selection process. It shows that Swedish politicians prioritize the concerns of public opinion and Swedish taxpayers and that this risk aversion is particularly noticeable when working with state actors in countries with democratic challenges. However, the underlying reasons for this trend vary depending on the political ideology of the political party in power, as further highlighted by HDCR.

*During the period when right-leaning parties were in power [referring to the period of 2006 to 2014], there was a strong focus on internal risk control and fighting corruption. This led to a decrease in state-to-state cooperation, potentially attributed to their ideological stance favoring limited state involvement in society. However, the main reason for this focus on risk aversion was driven by the desire to demonstrate the results*

*of Swedish taxpayers' money in developing countries (...) Interestingly, I observed a similar trend during the previous government's term, which was led by left-leaning parties such as the Social Democrats and the Green Party. We also reduced our state-to-state cooperation and sometimes withdrew support from recipient governments. However, the underlying reason for this avoidance of state-to-state cooperation and increased risk aversion was different. It was driven by a normative agenda, where the Minister of International Development Cooperation aimed to express their disapproval of governments moving away from democracy. It was a symbolic form of politics intended to discourage or punish them, hoping to steer them back towards a more democratic path (HDCR).*

These findings suggest that irrespective of the political party in power in Sweden, there is a tendency to avoid state-to-state cooperation. This challenges the generalization made by Allen and Flynn (2018) in their study, which suggests that liberal governments tend to channel aid through NGOs, while conservative governments prefer direct aid to recipient governments. However, this finding could be seen as a complement to the arguments put forth by Dietrich (2021) that Sweden's neoliberal approach, favoring competitive contracting and emphasizing short-term outcomes, leads to the bypassing of state actors. This is also consistent with Dietrich's (2013) claim that donors employ bypass tactics in fragile states due to implementation risks. One aspect not considered by these studies is the different ideological justifications behind these bypass tactics. While both left-leaning and right-leaning political parties in Sweden considers implementation risks, left-leaning parties prioritize normative approaches centered on *democratic* and feminist foreign policies, reflecting values associated with *liberal democracy*. On the other hand, right-leaning parties adopt a risk-aware approach to combat corruption and exert stricter control over funds, aligning more closely with Dietrich's (2013) findings.

Moreover, risk awareness is not only evident at the political level, which likely impacts Sida through government strategies, but it also influences Sida's daily operations and practices. For example, when engaging with potential collaboration partners, whether state or non-state actors, Sida employs a rigorous control mechanism known as a "system audit" (HDCT). This audit ensures that Sida selects partners with suitable structures, governance mechanisms, and internal control systems. This guarantees that these partners have the capacity and quality of the partner to fulfill their commitments (CK, HDCT, MELS, PS). During the interview, MELS emphasized the importance of the quality of the partner.

*The quality of your partner is really important, like, super important. I'd say it's probably the most important thing to think about when choosing beneficiaries. You know, is this partner reliable? Can they actually follow through on what they say they want to do? Do they have the influence to make things happen? (MELS).*

Consequently, Sida places paramount importance on the quality, capacity, and reliability of its partners when selecting aid beneficiaries. By evaluating the internal capacity of potential partners, Sida aims to minimize the risk of mismanagement or corruption.

### **6.2.2 Compliance Incentives**

In 2007, the implementation of the internal governance and control ordinance (2007:603), commonly known as "Fisken" (Swedish for "the Fish"), bolstered the focus on *risk awareness* in Swedish international development cooperation. This initiative also led to the establishment of *compliance incentives*, which were observed among Sida officials, as highlighted by MELS.

*Sida interpreted the ordinance in a rather peculiar way, assuming that they needed to exercise strict control over the exact allocation of all funds and be accountable for their partners' expenditures. Consequently, Sida became more cautious in selecting partners and evaluating their financial management systems (MELS).*

This posed a challenge in providing funds through recipient governments, which often have weaker financial control systems. MELS argued this and continue claiming that due to perceived risks, Sida chose to fund major multilateral organizations like the World Bank, the UN system, and significant civil society organizations, which already had robust control measures in place, instead of channeling funds through government agencies in partner countries. MELS recalled how the ordinance's implementation affected risk awareness and contributed to compliance incentives.

*I remember the time when "Fisken" came, and during that time, the Executive Director, and General Director of Sida gave conflicting messages to the Sida staff. While they stressed the importance of being aware of the new regulations and better-assessing partners' abilities to handle funds, they also encouraged staff to take risks and be brave. Despite this encouragement, most people played it safe and chose the less risky option to avoid being associated with any potential scandal, such as corruption scandals (MELS).*

This suggests that there are *compliance incentives* within Sida, influenced by the implementation of "Fisken," which has resulted in a culture of *risk awareness* and a preference

for established and controlled funding channels instead of state actors. As outlined in the Theoretical Framework, adhering to institutional rules can lead to professional benefits, such as career advancement or larger budgets, while non-compliance can have negative consequences, including loss of funding or damage to reputation (Dietrich, 2021). As shown, during the implementation of "Fisken," Sida staff received conflicting messages regarding compliance. Nevertheless, the risks associated with being involved in an event like a corruption scandal, which could potentially harm one's reputation within the agency, served as incentives for staff to prioritize adherence to the new regulations over the encouragement from the Executive Director and the General Director of Sida to be bold and take risks.

### **6.2.3 Administrative Burden**

Sida officials have numerous requirements to fulfill before granting a partnership with an aid recipient. In addition to conducting the MDPA and the internal governance and control systems audit for each new partner, Sida also assesses their capacity to incorporate development perspectives into aid implementation. This evaluation covers several factors, including the utilization of human rights-based approaches, gender perspectives, environmental sustainability, conflict management, and poverty alleviation.

Certain interview respondents emphasized that Embassy staff, who bear the responsibility of implementing the country's strategies, experience the impact of an administrative burden. This burden, in several ways, influences the decision-making process regarding the selection of new partners.

*Assessing new partners can be time-consuming, especially for small or newly-created organizations (CK).*

*A while back, someone remarked on the number of people working with development cooperation at Sida and the significant funds they manage and spend. They suggested that if we were to assess our own organization's capacity to handle such a sum, we would conclude that we lack the necessary resources (HMENA).*

These burdens not only consume time and resources but also divert attention away from fieldwork. The focus on administrative tasks can undermine the use of flexible approaches to work, which are crucial for adapting to changing circumstances, fostering innovation, and maximizing the impact of development cooperation efforts (Honig & Gulrajani, 2018).

## 6.2.4 Flexibility

As stated in the introduction, the Swedish government is responsible for providing instructions to Sida regarding its priorities in different countries, regions, or globally. During the interviews, respondents highlighted that these instructions conveyed through bilateral, regional, and global strategies, serve as the main guiding document for Sida's operational work. This work is carried out by Sida staff stationed in Swedish foreign authorities' offices (PS, HMENA, HUA). However, Sida has the discretion to choose aid recipients if they meet the criteria and objectives outlined in the strategy, as stated by HDCR.

*Sida ultimately has the freedom to choose its cooperation partners, as long as they adhere to these strategies and the specified limitations. If the strategy does not explicitly restrict the selection of actors, then Sida is generally free to make the decision itself (HDCR).*

The decision-making power is clearly distributed within Sida and among Sida staff at the Embassy level. The Heads of Development Cooperation at the Embassies have the authority to make independent decisions up to a specific financial threshold. This is further emphasized by a statement issued by the HDCT:

*The decision-making process depends on the amount of money involved. In Tanzania, we have a fully delegated operation where decision-making authority is delegated to me up to a certain amount. I can make decisions on matters that involve up to 80 million Swedish kronor, which includes selecting potential cooperation partners. However, if the contribution exceeds 80 million kronor, the decision-making authority goes back to the Sida headquarters in Stockholm and the Head of the Africa Department. If the contribution is above 200 million kronor, then the decision goes to the General Director of Sida (HDCT).*

However, others argue that in practical terms, much of the power lies with the program officer at Sida who analyzes and determines the suitability of potential partners. Although the Head of the Department in Stockholm is responsible for deciding on contributions exceeding 80 million kronor, and the General Director of Sida for those exceeding 200 million kronor, the analysis is still carried out at the country or strategy level. The Head of the Department or the General Director simply reviews, asks questions, modifies, or agrees with the evaluation before making the final decision (MELS, HMENA). This means that while the ultimate decision rests

with someone else, the analysis and decision-making process effectively occur at the "strategy-owner level," as emphasized by MELS.

Thus, Sida staff holds significant decision-making authority in choosing cooperation partners, as long as they adhere to the instructions and restrictions set forth in the government strategy. This freedom and power dynamic allows for *flexibility* in tailoring projects to specific contexts, rather than relying on standardized approaches (Honig & Gulrajani, 2020).

### **6.2.5 Strategy Inheritance**

Another recurring pattern observed in interviews related to the subthemes of flexibility and the administrative burden was the inheritance of strategies. The perspective on this matter varies among the interviewees. Some referred to it as the actual adoption of an existing strategy upon assuming the position of Head of Development Cooperation, which might remain valid for an additional two years. They emphasized the need to adapt the strategy based on its performance, as highlighted by SAS.

*When you take on the role of Head of Development Cooperation, you inherit an ongoing program that has already been established and has existing agreements in place, which can extend for a period of two or three years. Your responsibility lies in ensuring the fulfillment of these agreements and enabling your partners to achieve the expected results through ongoing discussions and consultation. In case any weaknesses are identified, they must be addressed with the support of consultants (SAS).*

*You do not have the freedom to start from scratch; rather, you must work within the framework of the program and the political instructions outlined in the strategy. Only when a new strategy is adopted do you have the opportunity to address new issues (SAS).*

However, certain behaviors within the role of the Head of Development Cooperation, spinning back to *administrative burdens* and the lack of incentives for staff to be *flexible*, could potentially create a tendency for simply renewing strategies instead of engaging in an iterative process. This process would involve experimentation, learning from experience, and making necessary adjustments in response to changing circumstances, as according to the *flexibility* concept established by the Theoretical Framework. HUA acknowledged the presence of the approach of renewing strategies in the interview but also stressed the importance of flexibility for the Head of Development Cooperation.

*It is often easier to continue following the same path, so to speak. While there may be tendencies towards this approach, there are also instances where significant changes*



*can be made. This is because our analysis may lead us to the conclusion that adopting a different approach is necessary in order to achieve the desired results. A particularly interesting example from Mozambique demonstrates how the Head of Development Cooperation decided to pursue a completely different approach to make a tangible impact on the lives of impoverished individuals (HUA).*

MELS highlighted another viewpoint, emphasizing the benefits of continuing strategies with state actors whom Sida has a good relationship with.

*Continuing to fund an ongoing project with an established partner is always easier than starting a completely new project with a new partner. This is particularly true when the objective is to assist the recipient country, and when a good working relationship and programs have already been established with the government. It makes sense to continue these programs until political or financial issues, such as corruption scandals, arise (MELS).*

Thus, MELS also argue that the inherence and continuation of partnerships often persist until a significant event disrupts them. Building on this, MELS implies that in countries such as Tanzania, which has received a high percentage of development aid through state actors throughout the years, the continuation of strategies could be traced back to the Paris Declaration.

*The Paris Declaration of Aid Effectiveness had a significant impact. Like other donor governments, Sweden also signed the Paris Declaration and adhered to the guideline that aid should primarily be directed through the recipient government to promote country ownership. I think that with countries like Tanzania, where Sweden has a longstanding partnership with the government and has committed substantial funding to big programs, the relationship was initially influenced by these Paris principles, and unless there are significant political changes in Tanzania, it may be easier to maintain the current modus operandi instead of shifting to funding through multilateral systems (MELS).*

This suggests that the Paris Declaration of Aid Effectiveness has influenced the partners with whom Sida collaborates. As country ownership is a crucial aspect of this agreement, countries that have not undergone significant political changes, such as a decline in democratic governance, will continue to engage in bilateral cooperation with Sida. This is particularly evident when comparing the descriptive statistics of democracy levels between Zambia and

Tanzania. Despite Zambia having a higher overall score on the V-Dem indexes, it experienced a notable decrease in democracy levels and received less state-to-state cooperation. In other words, while democracy levels are important, declines in democracy levels hold even greater significance.

### 6.3 Ending Partnerships

Sida is heavily involved in implementing and determining strategy execution, but it is the Government that ultimately has the responsibility to finalize those strategies. Sida officials, being experts in their field, encounter political constraints as they attempt to strike a balance between the agency's long-term goals and the challenges of operating within a political climate where politicians prioritize public opinion through symbolic gestures and occasionally make hasty and uninformed decisions to withdraw funding from recipient countries. These challenges contribute to a political-technical interface that lacks dialogue, as evident from respondents' descriptions of their experiences.

*The new government in Sweden, they have recently cut 45% of funding for the Palestine strategy in our region. This decision seems illogical to me, considering the current trend and events in the area. It appears that this decision was made without any solid reasons or developments that would justify reducing funding for the strategy. It was simply a topic of discussion among political parties (HMENA).*

*To make such significant changes so quickly goes against our obligations as a donor, as laid out in our agreements and norms. The six-month timeline we were given to phase out our development cooperation funds was not in line with our own ministry's guidelines for sustainable phase-out (SAS).*

*The Minister's decision was based on the political leadership's assessment of the situation in Cambodia, and it was now our responsibility to carry out this decision. Despite our disagreement with this decision, we were given a week to inform all relevant parties, including the government, UNDP, EU, and UNICEF, who were our close partners in the country (SAS).*

As per the Theoretical Framework, political constraints limit the independence of Sida officials and their flexibility to adapt their work accordingly (Honig & Gulrajani, 2018). When aid agencies encounter considerable political uncertainty, they have minimal freedom to modify their interventions based on local circumstances or address emerging requirements. This political uncertainty can help explain why Sida may refrain from collaborating with

governmental actors in non-democratic countries, as the actions of the Swedish politicians in such contexts lack predictability in response to political developments in the recipient country.

## 6.4 Summary of Results

The findings of the thesis demonstrate that Sida's process of selecting aid recipients is influenced by various factors. One significant external factor is the global increase in repressive governments and the presence of limited democratic environments. These circumstances raise concerns about the commitment of recipient countries to democracy and human rights. Consequently, Sida has shifted its focus away from state actors as aid recipients, indicating a decreased preference for state-to-state cooperation.

Sida's attention to fragile states also impacts its selection of aid recipients, as the agency now prioritizes engagement with these nations over relatively stable countries, marking a departure from past practices. Fragile states present *complex* and unpredictable environments, which pose challenges for Sida officials who must navigate these contexts effectively. The increased emphasis on fragile states likely stems from an awareness of their heightened vulnerability and the potential for aid to have a significant impact.

The selection process is not solely influenced by external factors but is also shaped by internal factors within Sida, such as *administrative burden*. *Risk awareness* also plays a crucial role in determining aid recipients. The Swedish government, accountable to its taxpayers, approaches funding state actors in fragile states with caution due to associated risks. *Political constraints* driven by the need for accountability impact the reasoning behind aid recipient selection. Regardless of the political party in power, there is a shared desire to restrict state-to-state cooperation, although for different reasons.

Sida's day-to-day operations are particularly influenced by risk awareness, which is reflected in the agency's control mechanisms. A "system audit" is employed to assess potential partners, evaluating their structures, governance mechanisms, internal control systems, capacity, and reliability. *Compliance incentives* within Sida, driven by internal governance and control regulations, further reinforce a culture of risk awareness within the agency.

The role of democracy is significant in the selection of state or non-state actors as aid recipients. The findings suggest that Sida's emphasis on democratic stability influences its decision-making process. If a recipient country has maintained democratic stability and positive outcomes have been achieved through state-to-state cooperation, the partnership is likely to continue. This tendency to maintain established strategies and partnerships sheds light on why

certain countries, like Tanzania, continue to receive a significant percentage of state-to-state cooperation. The enduring partnerships, such as the longstanding collaboration between Tanzania and Sweden, can be attributed to the guidelines outlined in the Paris Declaration of Aid Effectiveness. These guidelines emphasize the importance of country ownership, and if such partnerships have yielded positive outcomes while the recipient country maintains democratic stability, it is likely that the partnership will persist. Thus, the findings indicate that significant democratic regression would likely prompt Sweden to discontinue funding to state actors, suggesting that the threshold for ending partnerships lies more in substantial democratic backsliding rather than an absolute level of democracy.

Sida officials face political constraints as they strive to balance long-term goals with the prevailing political climate, where politicians prioritize public opinion and may hastily decide to withdraw funding. The lack of dialogue between politics and technical expertise contributes to the challenges faced in dealing with these political constraints. This absence of dialogue can lead to uninformed decisions when *ending partnerships*, potentially conflicting with Sida's obligations as a donor.

## 7. Conclusion

The following chapter aims to answer the research question: How does the level of democracy in recipient countries influence Sida's selection process when choosing between state and non-state aid recipient actors?

Previous research has provided limited insights into this research question and has not adequately explored the impact of democracy on the selection of aid recipients. The importance of democracy in this context cannot be underestimated, as it is a stated objective of Sida and is frequently mentioned in country strategies as a reason for limited state-to-state cooperation, although the decision-making process behind these choices is not transparent.

The selection process of aid recipients plays a crucial role in international development cooperation as it significantly affects the developmental outcomes in recipient countries. Choosing inappropriate aid recipients can have severe consequences that may impede democratic progress in these nations, as previous research has demonstrated (Dietrich, 2021). Therefore, understanding how Sida officials consider the role of democracy in their decision-making is of utmost importance.

So, how does the level of democracy in recipient countries influence Sida's selection process when choosing between state and non-state aid recipients? This thesis demonstrates that Sida's selection process for aid recipients is influenced by various internal factors within Sida, the political landscape in Sweden, and external factors. The comprehensive findings presented in this thesis reveal that the decline in democracy levels in the recipient country has a more significant impact on the selection process than the absolute level of democracy.

While the level of democracy is taken into consideration, it primarily serves as a justification for bypass tactics, particularly by left-leaning parties with a normative approach to international development cooperation. There is inconsistency and disparity among countries regarding their levels of democracy, quality of government, trade relationships, and the types of actors that Sida chooses to allocate aid through in each recipient country. The Head of Development Cooperation has considerable authority and decides on a country-by-country basis. In the absence of restrictions, they can choose the preferred actor type. Restrictions or sudden fund withdrawals from state actors are typically attributed to abrupt political changes and declines in democracy, rather than an evaluation based on the absolute level of democracy. Therefore, the decline in democracy levels ultimately has the greatest influence on the selection process.

Sweden maintains long-term state-to-state partnerships based on the principles outlined in the Paris Declaration, which prioritize country ownership. These partnerships persist when positive outcomes are achieved, and the recipient country maintains democratic stability. However, if there is a significant and abrupt decline in democracy, Sweden discontinues funding for state actors. Furthermore, the Swedish government and Sida are highly aware of the risks associated with aid capture. Consequently, they employ bypass tactics to avoid engaging in state-to-state cooperation when democracy has declined, and the perceived risk of aid capture has increased.

## **7.1 Empirical Limitations and Policy Implications**

Empirically speaking, qualitative case research has certain drawbacks, some of which have been highlighted in the methods section. One major disadvantage that needs to be addressed is the generalizability of the findings, which arises from both the limited number of cases analyzed and the nature of the data used.

Firstly, the focus on Sweden itself presents a limitation. Although Sweden is often compared to other donor governments such as Denmark, Norway, and the Netherlands in current research, usually due to their altruistic aid allocation patterns, the comparison tends to revolve more around the allocation patterns rather than the decision-making processes in each country. This raises the question of how generalizable the findings of this thesis truly are, considering the unique decentralized governance system of Sweden, where government agencies like Sida hold significant decision-making power.

It is important to note that this research does not extensively delve into the development implications of the selection process between state and non-state aid recipients. As such, further research could explore the potential risks associated with empowering civil society organizations (CSOs) and the potential implications for the sovereignty of recipient states. Investigating whether there is a possibility of undermining the role of sovereign states by prioritizing CSOs in the aid allocation process would provide valuable insights into the potential trade-offs and long-term effects of such decisions. Additionally, expanding the sample size to include perspectives from a broader range of stakeholders within the decision-making process would be beneficial. This could involve gathering insights from individuals working at Sida, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, as well as politicians who bear the responsibility of ultimately deciding on the selection of aid recipients.

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# Appendices

## Appendix A

### **Subject: Request for an Interview: Investigating Sida's Aid Recipient Selection Processes**

Dear [Name of the Identified Interviewee],

I hope this email finds you well. My name is Ismail Bazine, and I am currently pursuing a master's degree focused on political science and international relations at the University of Gothenburg. I am writing to you today as I am conducting research on the allocation of development aid by Sida. Specifically, I am investigating the decision-making process involved in selecting state or non-state aid recipients and the influence of the recipient country's level of democracy on Sida's aid distribution.

As an esteemed expert in this field [modify this paragraph according to the identified interviewee], I would be honored if you would participate in an interview as part of my research. Specifically, I am interested in hearing about your experiences and interpretations of Sida's donor motivations and behaviors, particularly with regard to the criteria used in allocating aid to state or non-state actors, with a specific emphasis on the recipient country's level of democracy.

The interview will be conducted virtually via Zoom (or any other suitable platform) and will take approximately 30-45 minutes. The interview will delve into matters that cannot be obtained through existing policy documentation in Sida's reports. Instead, it will explore your personal experiences and insights on the subject matter.

Your participation in this interview would be immensely valuable to the success of my research, and I would be deeply appreciative of your willingness to take part.

If you are interested in participating, please inform me of your availability, and we can schedule a suitable time that works for you. However, I would appreciate it if we could schedule the interview within the next two coming weeks to ensure that it aligns with my research timeline. Feel free to reach out to me if you have any questions or concerns.

Thank you for considering my request, and I eagerly await your response.

Best regards,  
Ismail Bazine

## Appendix B

<b>Details of the Interview Participants</b>				
<b>Named in Research</b>	<b>Date &amp; Duration</b>	<b>Platform &amp; Language</b>	<b>Potential Biases &amp; Implications</b>	<b>Relevance to the Study</b>
Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning Specialist (MELS)	April 26 <sup>th</sup> , 2023, for a duration of 52 minutes	Microsoft Teams & English	Although MELS's knowledge of Sida's current operations may be outdated due to his 5-year absence from working at the agency, MELS has the potential to offer a more unbiased perspective compared to present employees, as was evident during the interview.	MELS has valuable leadership experience from Sida and the Swedish Embassies in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Rwanda. As a former Sida employee, MELS brings objectivity to the table. These qualities make MELS an excellent respondent for the interviews. MELS has a diverse background, with expertise in Monitoring and Evaluation as well as Contribution Management and experience in various roles such as Director the Evaluation Secretariat, Head of Planning, Monitoring, and Evaluation Unit at Sida and Head of Development Cooperation to Rwanda and Burundi at the Swedish Embassy. Moreover, MELS possesses knowledge of Sida's internal governance structures and decision-making tools, which are highly relevant to this study.
Head of Development Cooperation, Embassy of Sweden to Tanzania (HDCT)	April 28 <sup>th</sup> , 2023, for a duration of 47 minutes	Zoom & English	It is crucial to acknowledge and address the potential implications and biases that may arise from respondent's background in order to ensure an objective and unbiased analysis of the aid recipient selection process. As a long-term employee of Sida, the respondent may possess institutional bias, which could lead to a predisposition towards supporting and promoting Sida's approach and policies. Furthermore, the respondent might be constrained in expressing certain opinions or information due to professional obligations or organizational restrictions. However, it should be noted that during the interview, the respondent demonstrated a	HDCT is highly relevant in this study, especially when examining case countries like Tanzania. HDCT's extensive experience working for Sida over the years provides valuable insights into Sida's operations and decision-making processes. Furthermore, HDCT's current role as the Head of Development Cooperation at the Embassy of Sweden to Tanzania positions HDCT at the forefront of aid implementation and decision-making in the country. HDCT's expertise and position make them an essential resource for understanding Sida's aid allocation strategies and the specific dynamics of aid delivery in Tanzania.



			willingness to speak freely and shared insights with openness and transparency. This can be observed in the quotes attributed to the respondent. It is important to note that these biases and implications extend to other Sida officials as well.	
Managing Director at EBA (MDEBA)	April 28 <sup>th</sup> , 2023, for a duration of 54 minutes	Zoom & English	MDEBA's familiarity with Sida's internal decision-making processes may be restricted due to his lack of experience working there. Nevertheless, due to MDEBA's capacity as the Managing Director of the EBA, MDEBA is well-positioned to offer an objective and informed viewpoint as an external observer. This was clear during the interview.	MDEBA's extensive leadership and research experience in analyzing the Swedish International Development Cooperation makes him a highly relevant candidate to contribute to this study and provide valuable insights as an external observer.
Senior Advisor at Sida (SAS)	May 8 <sup>th</sup> , 2023, for a duration of 57 minutes	Zoom & English	The identified <a href="#">biases and implications</a> attributed to the previous Sida staff should also be considered when assessing the potential biases of SAS.	SAS's extensive experience working for Sida since the early 1990s makes SAS highly relevant to the study, particularly in the context of Cambodia and Bangladesh. SAS previous positions as Head of Development Cooperation at the Embassy of Sweden to Cambodia and the Embassy of Sweden to Bangladesh demonstrate SAS direct involvement in the development cooperation activities in these countries. Moreover, SAS has held various managerial roles within Sida, indicating familiarity with Sida's internal processes and decision-making mechanisms.
Counselor, Deputy Head of Development Cooperation, and Senior Program Manager, Embassy of Sweden in Kenya (CK)	May 8 <sup>th</sup> , 2023, for a duration of 50 minutes	Zoom & English	The identified <a href="#">biases and implications</a> attributed to the previous Sida staff should also be considered when assessing the potential biases of CK.	CK's expertise is highly relevant in a study examining Sida's aid recipient selection process, especially within the context of Kenya. Currently working at the Embassy of Sweden in Kenya, CK brings a wealth of knowledge to the study. Having accumulated over three decades of experience at Sida, CK possesses a deep understanding of Sida's operations and policies. CK's previous roles as an analyst in Guinea Bissau and Mozambique have exposed them to various issues, including civil society support and budget support. This diverse experience equips CK with valuable insights into the intricate aspects of aid

				recipient selection, drawing upon their firsthand experience working on diverse projects and addressing different challenges.
Policy Specialist, Sida (PS)	May 9 <sup>th</sup> , 2023, for a duration of 52 minutes	Microsoft Teams & English	The identified <a href="#">biases and implications</a> attributed to the previous Sida staff should also be considered when assessing the potential biases of PS.	PS's expertise and background make PS highly relevant in a study focusing on Sida's aid recipient selection process. As a policy specialist for capacity development, PS brings valuable insights into how capacity development is utilized as a method at Sida and in partner organizations within the context of contribution management. With over 20 years of experience working for various organizations, PS has extensive experience in both humanitarian and development settings. This diverse background allows PS to understand and analyze the aid recipient selection process from multiple perspectives, having worked on both the donor and recipient sides.
Head of Unit for Middle East and North Africa, Sida (HMENA)	May 10 <sup>th</sup> , 2023, for a duration of 55 minutes	Zoom & English	The identified <a href="#">biases and implications</a> attributed to the previous Sida staff should also be considered when assessing the potential biases of HMENA.	HMENA's extensive experience and diverse roles within Sida make them highly relevant in a study focusing on Sida's aid recipient selection process. With over 20 years of experience working for Sida, including positions as Head of the MENA Unit, Head of the Global Team for Social Sustainable Development, and Head of the Unit collaborating with the private sector, HMENA brings a wealth of knowledge and expertise to the study. Overall, HMENA's extensive experience and diverse roles within Sida provide a comprehensive perspective on Sida's aid recipient selection process and enhance the credibility and relevance of the study.
Head of Unit for Southern, West-, Central Africa, Regional Coordination, Team Democracy (HUA)	May 12 <sup>th</sup> , 2023, for a duration of 37 minutes	Zoom & English	The identified <a href="#">biases and implications</a> attributed to the previous Sida staff should also be considered when assessing the potential biases of HUA.	HUA's extensive experience and current position at Sida make them highly relevant in a study about Sida's aid recipient selection process, especially regarding Zambia. As the Head of the Unit for Southern Africa, West- and Central Africa, and Regional Cooperation at the African Department at Sida HQ, HUA supports embassies in these regions and oversees the Democracy Team. With almost 25 years of experience at Sida, mainly in Africa, HUA possesses a deep understanding of the region and its unique challenges. HUA previous roles as a program manager, country economist and analyst, and Head of Development Cooperation at the Embassy of Sweden to Zambia provide valuable insights into aid implementation and recipient selection. Furthermore, HUA's expertise in

				<p>methods development and contribution management processes and systems, gained over six years, brings valuable knowledge to the study.</p>
<p>Head of Development Cooperation, Embassy of Sweden in Rwanda (HDCR)</p>	<p>May 16<sup>th</sup>, 2023, for a duration of 46 minutes</p>	<p>Zoom &amp; English</p>	<p>The identified <a href="#">biases and implications</a> attributed to the previous Sida staff should also be considered when assessing the potential biases of HDCR.</p>	<p>HDCR's relevance in studying Sida's aid recipient selection process can be attributed to several factors. Firstly, as the Head of Development Cooperation at the Swedish Embassy in Rwanda, HDCR is directly involved in managing personnel and financial resources for Sida's Embassy component. This hands-on experience provides valuable insights into the operational aspects of aid distribution. Secondly, HDCR has worked in various country contexts, including Ethiopia and Cambodia. Of particular interest for this study is HDCR's previous experience at the Swedish Embassy in Cambodia, which offers a deep understanding of the country's specific development challenges. This knowledge contributes to a comprehensive analysis of Sida's aid recipient selection process, especially concerning Cambodia. Thirdly, HDCR's thematic background in democracy and human rights adds another dimension to the study. HDCR's expertise in these areas sheds light on the role of democracy and human rights considerations in Sida's decision-making process. Furthermore, HDCR's previous roles at Sida's headquarters in Stockholm, where HDCR's dealt with governance and contribution management issues, enhance their expertise in aid strategies and decision-making processes. Lastly, HDCR's experience at the Department for International Development Cooperation at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs addresses a <a href="#">limitation</a> of the study, ensuring that the sample represents a broader perspective of Swedish development aid decision-making process.</p>

# Appendix C

## INTERVIEW GUIDE

### *SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS*

*Expected duration: 30-45 min per interview.*

*Questions related to thematic area 1: \**

*Questions related to thematic area 2: \*\**

*Questions related to thematic area: 3 \*\*\**

#### Before the interview

- Thank the interviewee for agreeing to be part of the study.
- Short introduction of the interviewer and the research project (send 1 pager beforehand).
- Brief introduction describing research – cross-check with the 1 pager.
- a) One or two sentences about WHY this interviewee is targeted.*
  
- Explain that they do not have to answer any questions they do not wish to and that they can withdraw at any time.
- Check/decide whether the interview is recorded (check)
- Confirm with the interviewee that they will not be named in research outputs. (CHECK/or afterward)
- Ask if they have any questions about the research before you begin.

#### After the interview

- Ask them if there is anything they think is worth adding that has not been mentioned during the interview.
- Ask them how they wish to be described in research outputs, whether their role/organization can be named, or if they want a more generic descriptor.
- Ask whether the interviewee has any concerns about what they said and whether there is anything they wish to clarify.
- Ask whether there is someone else they recommend we speak to who could provide insights/reflections relevant to the research. Ask whether it is possible to be introduced via the interviewee (snowball sampling).
- Ask whether it is ok to follow up with them should there be any follow-up questions or clarifications needed.
- Explain expected research outputs, including the expected date of publication and ask if they would like to receive a copy (keep short).
- Thank them for their time and contribution.

\*\*\*\*\*

## INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- 1) Could you please describe your current role within your organization and your past experiences?
- 2) Can you explain the overall mandate and objectives of the Swedish international development cooperation and how it guides the decision-making processes in selecting state or non-state actors in recipient countries? \*
  - a. What factors have influenced Sida's consistent reduction of development aid allocation through state actors over the years? What's your view of this trend?\*
- 3) In your opinion, what are some of the key factors that Sida takes into consideration when selecting state or non-state actors to work with in recipient countries? \*\*
- 4) Based on your experience, which external factors, such as improvements or declines in democracy levels, corruption, government effectiveness, rule of law, or political stability, have the greatest impact on Sida's decision-making process when aid recipients? Additionally, do you believe that a robust trade relationship between Sweden and the recipient country could potentially influence these decisions? \*\*\*
- 5) How do Sida and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs ensure that the cooperation partners selected are effective in contributing to sustainable outcomes? \*\*
  - a. How does Sida ensure that its support to state actors in countries with low levels of democracy does not reinforce existing power structures or worsen inequalities? \*\*

*[Here we move from general accounts to a more specific focus on the selection of state or non-state actors]*

- 6) Can you describe the complete decision-making process used by Sida and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to identify cooperation partners for a strategy, including all the entities involved, their corresponding activities, and how they impact the next entity and activity in the process chain? \*\*
  - a. How are potential cooperation partners evaluated and selected? Does the decision-making process for identifying cooperation partners differ when partnering with state actors versus non-state in the recipient country? \*\*
  - b. How does Sida ensure transparency in its selection process for cooperation partners? \*\*
  - c. Could you please clarify whether there is a standardized process or set criteria for selecting partners at Sida, or is it up to the individual discretion of the case officers? If not, why is there a lack of standardization in this area? \*\*
  - d. How much freedom do the strategy-implementing units have in selecting partners and forms of assistance, and what are the requirements that they need to fulfill in doing so? \*\*
  - e. To what extent are Sida officials able to exercise discretion in selecting state actors as aid recipients in the absence of strict limitations on working with the government? \*\*
  - f. Can you describe the criteria and principles currently used by Sida to weigh different types of interventions and partners against each other in a strategic manner? \*\*
  - g. In what ways do theories of change guide future choices of interventions, and how does this impact the decision-making process for selecting state or non-state actors as aid recipients? \*\*/\*\*\*
    - i. How does Sida's past experience with a particular cooperation partner affect their decision to continue working with them in the future? \*\*/\*\*\*

- ii. How does Sida decide to proceed with a specific partner over others? \*\*
  - h. Have there been any difficulties in creating clear and brief theories of change for Sida's aid initiatives? If yes, what are the implications for case officers who select cooperation partners?  
\*\*
  - i. What are the implications of Sida's long-term country strategies on decision-making processes between strategy periods, particularly in terms of withdrawing from a country during the strategy period? And how does Sida navigate the dilemma of whether to continue working in a country or withdraw when developing a new strategy?
- 7) What are the strengths and weaknesses of Sida's current approach to selecting aid recipients? Which practices do you consider particularly important, and what improvements could be made in the future?

## Appendix D

<b>Coding Scheme for Thematic Analysis of Interview Data</b>			
<b>Themes</b>	<b>EXTERNAL FACTORS</b>	<b>CHOICE OF AID RECIPIENT</b>	<b>ENDING PARTNERSHIPS</b>
<b>Subthemes</b>	Democracy Complexity Donor Coordination Changes in Aid Modality	Risk Awareness Administrative Burden Compliance Incentives Flexibility Strategy Inheritance	Political Constraints
<b>Quotes</b>	<p>“International Development Cooperation is trickier compared to other policy domains because you must consider various stakeholders. This includes the partner country, as well as significant players like the World Bank, the African Development Bank, the UN system, and other donors, some of whom are much larger and more powerful than Sweden. Consequently, you can't simply cherry-pick the most logical course of action, the most logical intervention or sector, it's more like a market where you get your share, which is a political game and there are ongoing dialogues at country level” (MELS).</p> <p>(Donor Coordination)</p>	<p>“We have robust control mechanisms to ensure the selection of partners with suitable structures, governing mechanisms, and internal control systems. However, evaluating new partners can be time-consuming, particularly for small or recently established organizations. We may also maintain partnerships from previous strategies if they have proven successful” (CK).</p> <p>(Administrative Burden &amp; Flexibility)</p>	<p>The Minister had contacted our Ambassador the day prior and had instructed us to discontinue all state-to-state cooperation in Cambodia. The Minister's decision was based on the political leadership's assessment of the situation in Cambodia, and it was now our responsibility to carry out this decision. Despite our disagreement with this decision, we were given a week to inform all relevant parties, including the government, UNDP, EU, and UNICEF, who were our close partners in the country. (...) This decision had significant repercussions, as it involved ending several decades of cooperation in the areas of primary education and environmental support, resulting in many positive indicators. (...) We had partnered with the UNDP and EU to fund these efforts, but we had to inform them that we could no longer honor our agreement, despite it being valid for another three or four years. This decision was not shared by any of our other development partners. None of them, including the EU, the UN, the development banks, the US or the Australians, shared this position and none of</p>

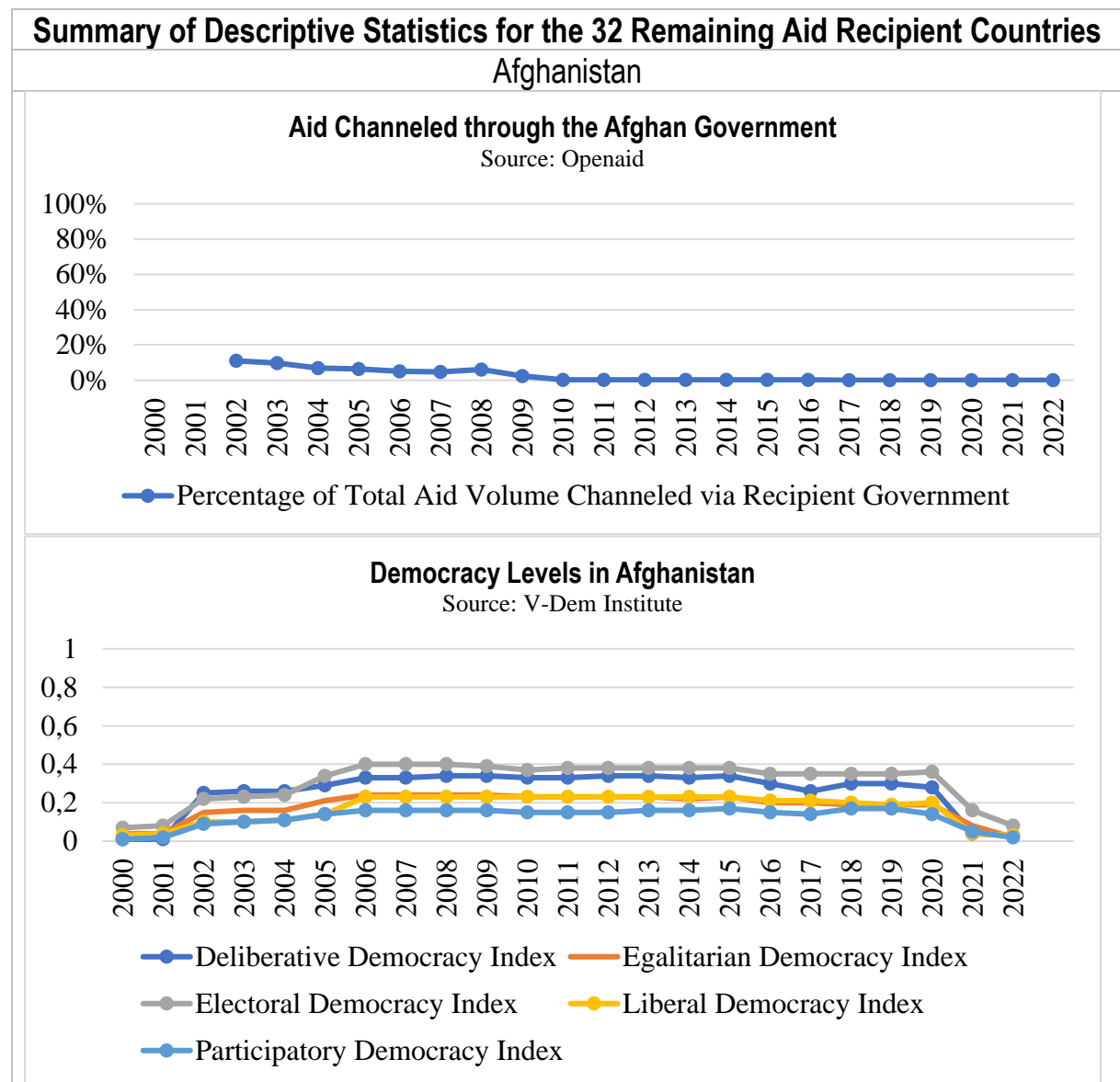
			them left state-to-state cooperation” (SAS).
	<p>“The global trend shows an increase in repressive governments, and I believe that is one reason why we have shifted away from direct government-to-government cooperation. Around 10 or 15 years ago, many countries received budget support or program support directly to their ministries. However, currently, that percentage has decreased significantly to around 6%. One reason for this shift is that we no longer view repressive governments as suitable partners for implementing development cooperation” (HMENA).</p>	<p>“A while back, someone remarked on the number of people working with development cooperation at Sida and the significant funds they manage and spend. They suggested that if we were to assess our own organization's capacity to handle such a sum, we would conclude that we lack the necessary resources” (HMENA).</p>	<p>“There are additional concerns at a higher government level. I mean, this is more about the fact that having five-year strategies makes sense from the perspective of previous recipients because they need funding predictability. At the country level, there is a need for political discussions on priorities with other donors and so on. It becomes very difficult to make changes on an annual basis.</p> <p>However, it's understandable that the government wants to change policies from time to time. There is definitely a tension between the long-term commitments required in development cooperation and the short-term focus of politics” (MELS).</p>
	<p>“Let me stress that this is just my personal opinion. In my view, Sweden is too small to have a significant impact on such matters. When we compare the investments made by China in Cambodia, the funds contributed by Sweden are very small and don't hold much weight. We are like a tiny drop in a large ocean. In the bigger picture, our financial resources and influence are not substantial enough to achieve the desired effect, such as withdrawing funds from countries that move away from democracy. I witnessed this firsthand when I was in Cambodia. It's unrealistic to expect that the Cambodian Prime Minister would</p>	<p>“It could be a good idea to think about teaming up with an international organization when collaborating with the government. Directly giving money to the government comes with a significant financial risk from a risk management point of view” (PS).</p> <p>(Risk Awareness)</p>	<p>“In 2020, we observed a negative trend in Tanzania's democratic space, making it challenging to communicate with the government. The international community also faced difficulties meeting with them, and there was a lack of dialogue between donors, the international community, and the government. The Minister of International Development Cooperation from Sweden visited Tanzania, held several meetings, and then decided to reduce aid volumes after the visit. We made this decision because we felt that the country was not progressing in the right direction, and it was no</p>

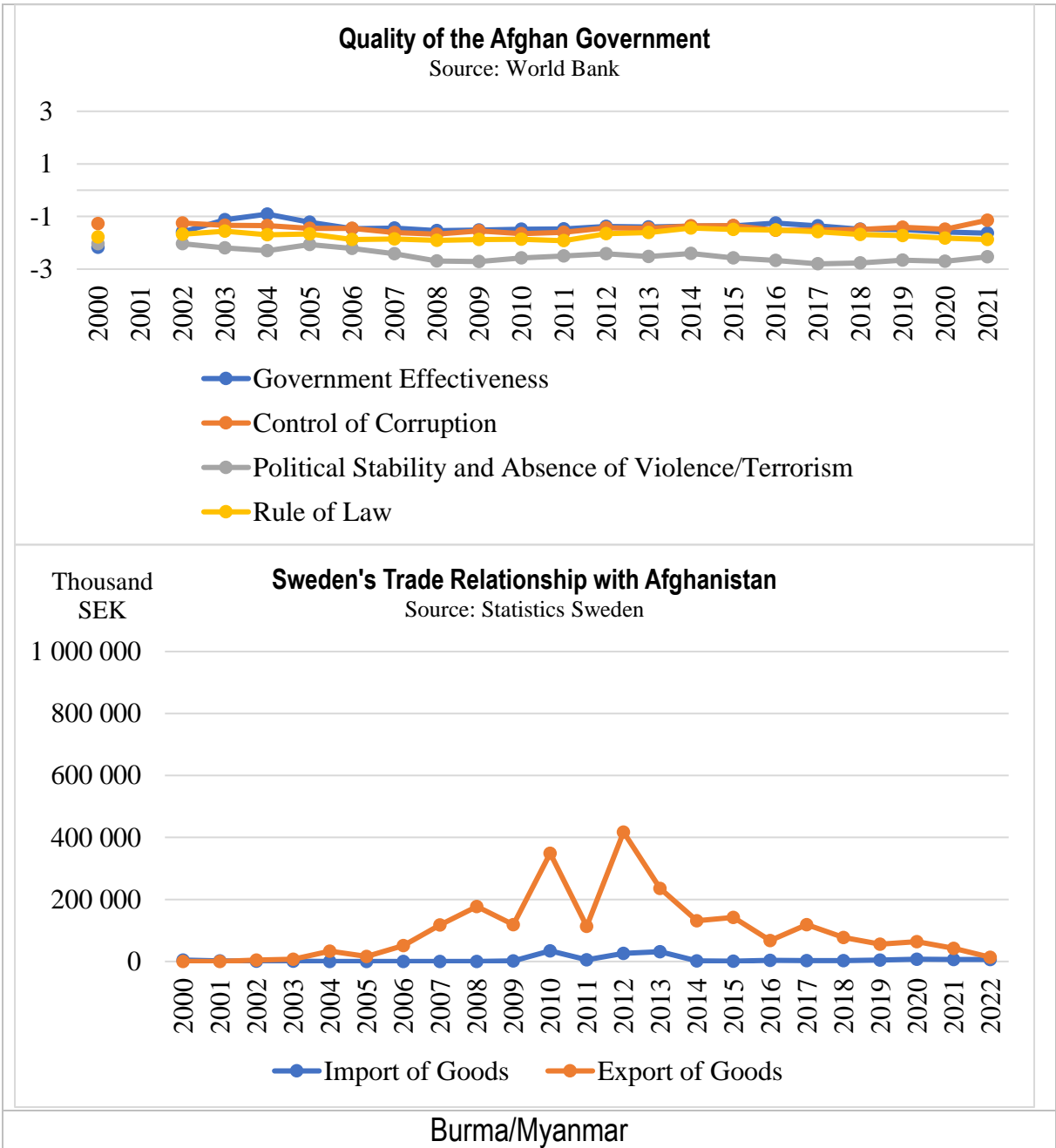


	<p>suddenly embrace democracy simply because Sweden expresses its opinions. It's a naive belief that we can bring about change without taking into account the complex realities of global politics“ (HDCR).</p>		<p>longer appropriate to continue providing aid as before” (HDCT).</p>
	<p>“If you haven't been involved in that particular area before, you first meet with other donors. If it's a government-covered area, you naturally discuss it with the government of that country first. Then, perhaps, you conduct a mapping exercise. You examine the various actors working in that specific thematic area and try to gather information from other donors or actors already working there. You look for any evaluations or needs-based assessments available. So, you conduct your own analysis, sometimes independently and other times with the help of consultants. After that, the approach can vary significantly” (HMENA).</p>	<p>“There are definitely institutional incentives that influence the way work is conducted at Sida. Certain regulations have an impact on the way things are done. When I joined Sida around 2003 and compare it to when I left in 2017, I noticed significant changes. In 2003, it was an organization that I considered to be more courageous. Country ownership was highly emphasized and valued. It was also an organization that appreciated thematic knowledge. For instance, if you worked with democracy and human rights, you were expected to be an expert in those areas. However, over time, particularly after the "Fisken" (referring to internal governance and control ordinance (2007:603)) and some external criticism towards Sida, there was a shift. Financial management skills became more important and were given greater validation. Skills like conducting capacity assessments of partners and applying new public management techniques gained prominence” (MELS).</p> <p>(Compliance Incentives)</p>	<p>Based on my experience, the condition of the democratic space is a crucial factor for Sweden to consider. Like, remember what went down here in the 2020s? Yeah, we noticed the decline and decided to do something about it. Random, ad hoc incidents usually don't make a big difference. It's more about spotting trends, you know? Not like a drought or a corruption case, but something that really affects whether we keep cooperating or call it quits” (HDCT).</p>
		<p>“I would like to add something to the discussion since you're</p>	<p>“The primary reason to discontinue using the government as a channel</p>

		<p>focusing on democracy, and what I'm about to say is related to democracy and governance issues. Additionally, I believe corruption also plays a role in determining which partner to select. This aspect is connected to internal control systems as well. For instance, if a country has a notorious reputation for high levels of corruption and lacks proper systems to monitor financial transactions, it might be more prudent to choose another actor. In doing so, we can be more confident that the financial flows are being managed appropriately” (CK).</p> <p>(Risk Awareness)</p>	<p>for Swedish aid is due to corruption scandals. In my opinion, this is the case across all situations where such scandals arise. Additionally, deliberate policy changes related to SRHR and homophobic agendas, such as those in Uganda, can also affect the decision to work with the government” (MDEBA).</p>
		<p>“Over the years, we've been placing more emphasis on addressing corruption and promoting anti-corruption measures. This has had an impact, and sometimes it feels like we shouldn't interact with government actors in certain countries. The level of corruption is so high that it's actually better to redirect the funds through alternative channels, perhaps” (CK)</p> <p>(Risk Awareness)</p>	

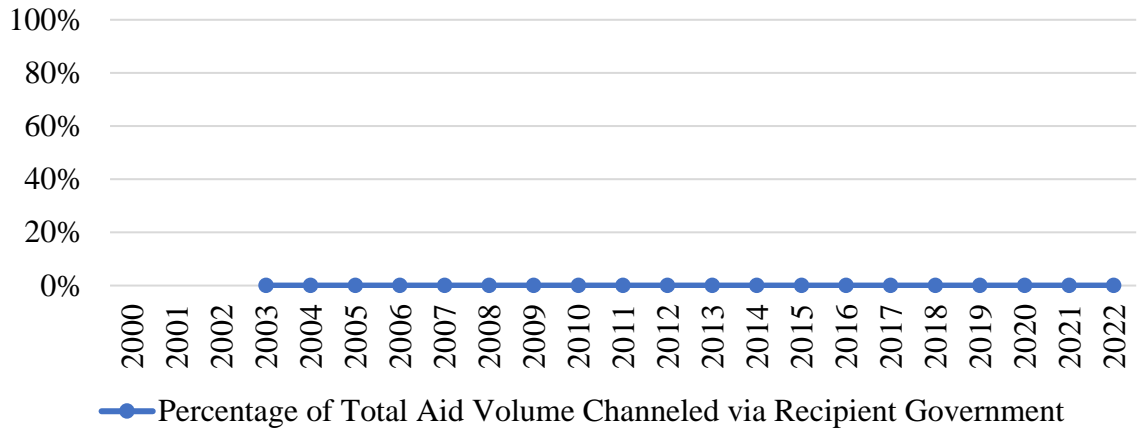
## Appendix E





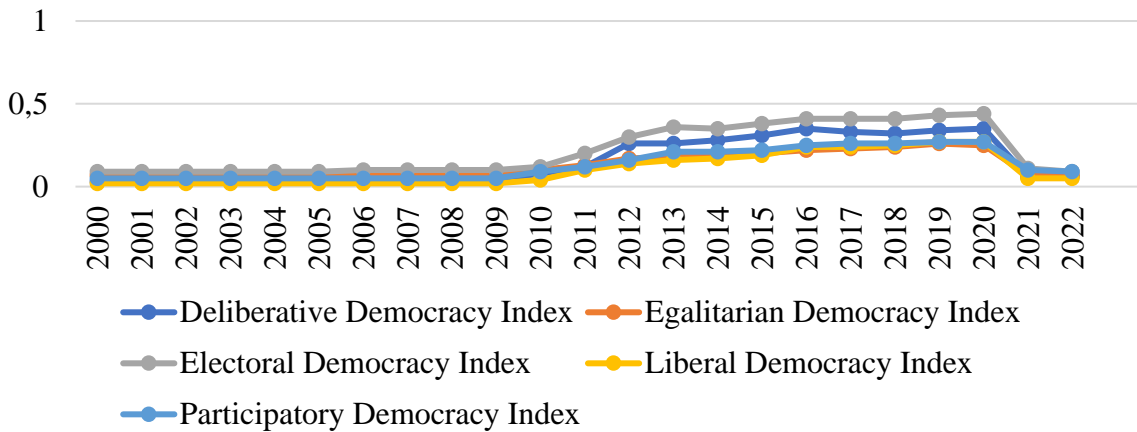
### Aid Channeled through the Government of Burma/Myanmar

Source: Openaid



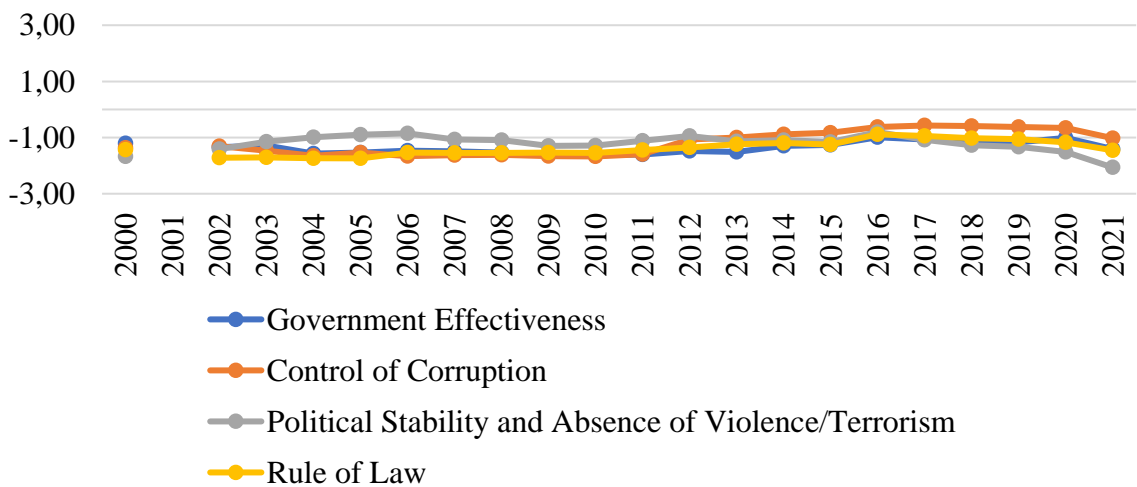
### Democracy Levels in Burma/Myanmar

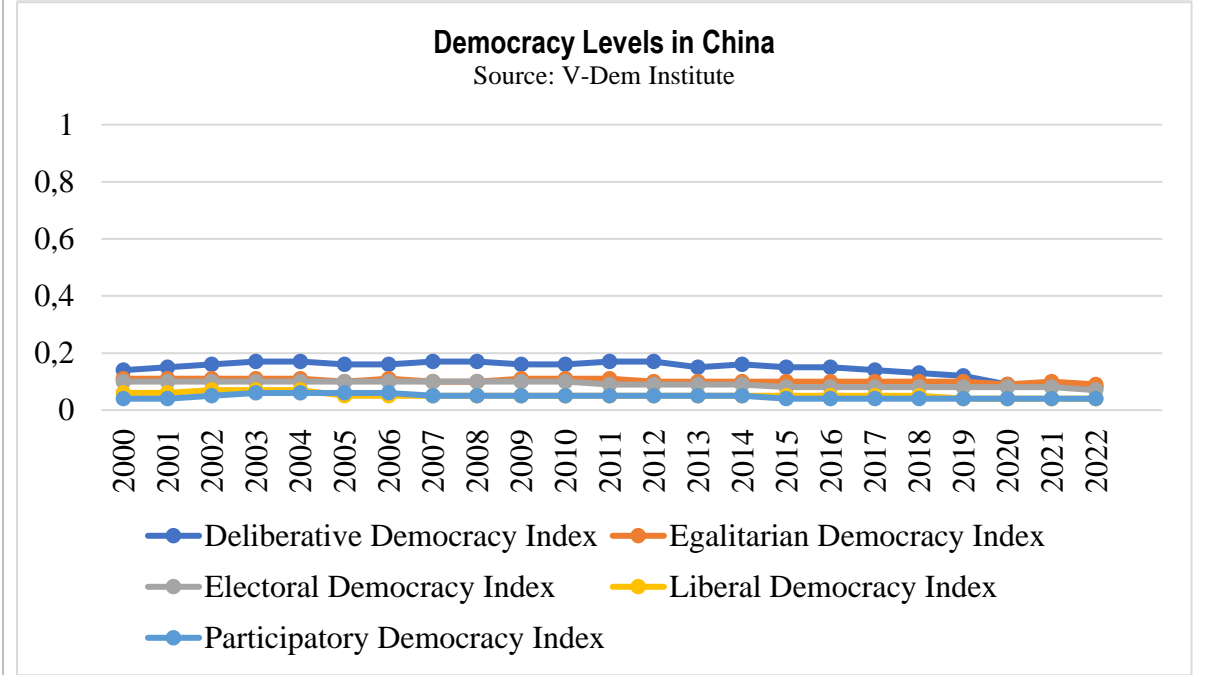
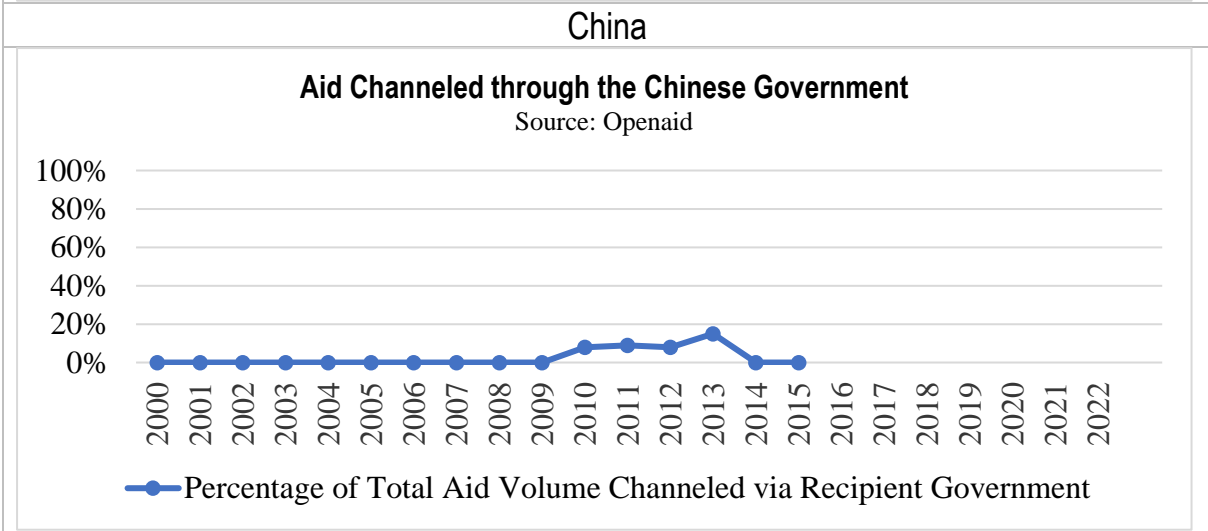
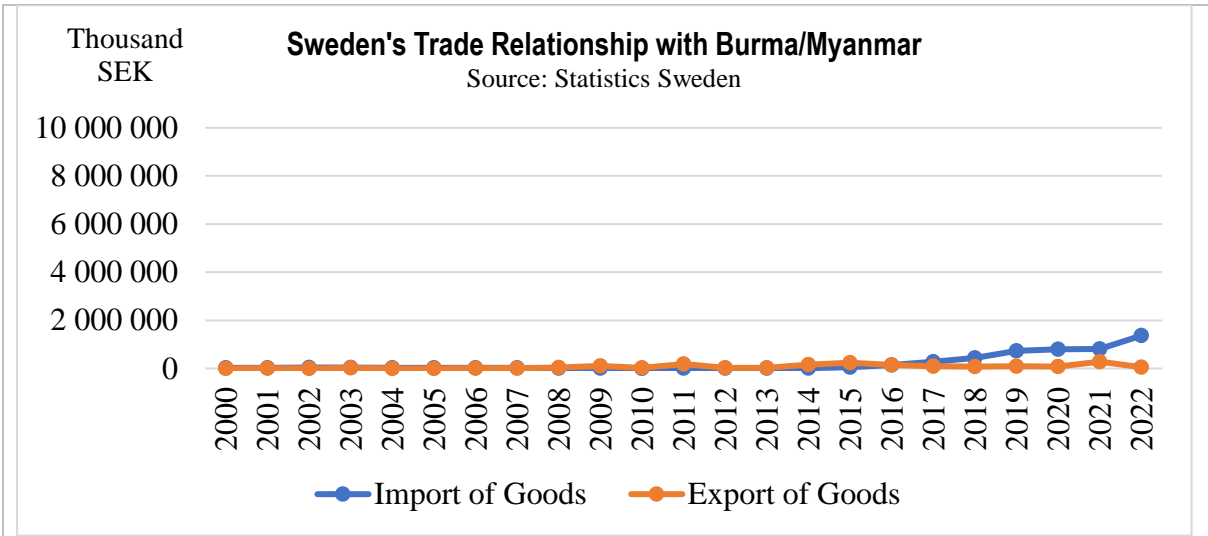
Source: V-Dem Institute



### Quality of the Government of Burma/Myanmar

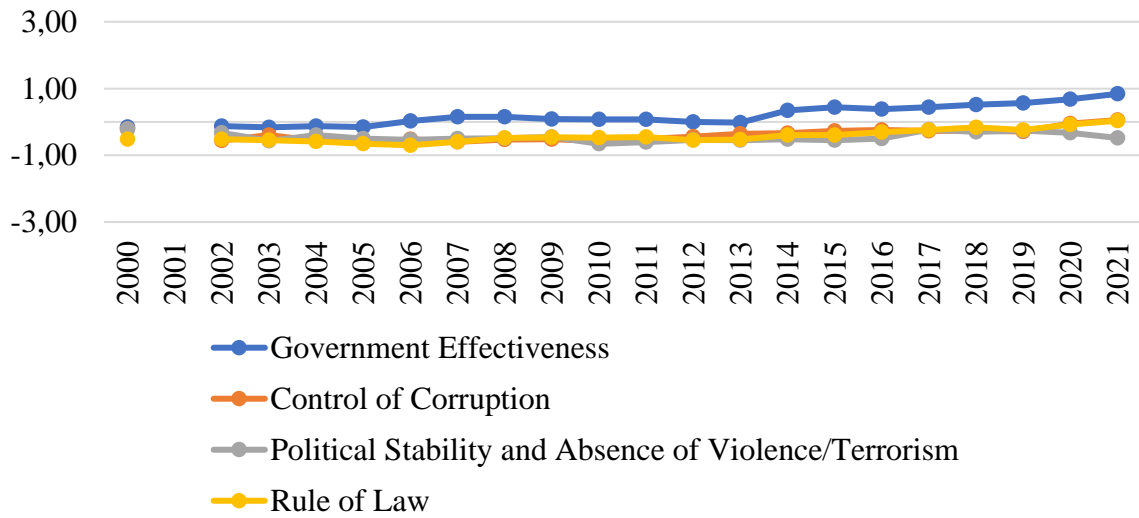
Source: World Bank





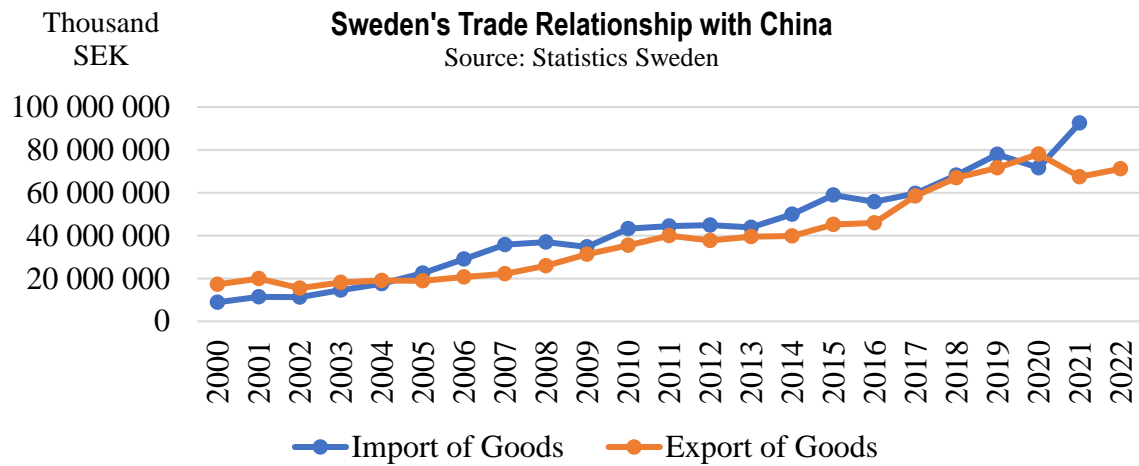
### Quality of the Chinese Government

Source: World Bank



### Sweden's Trade Relationship with China

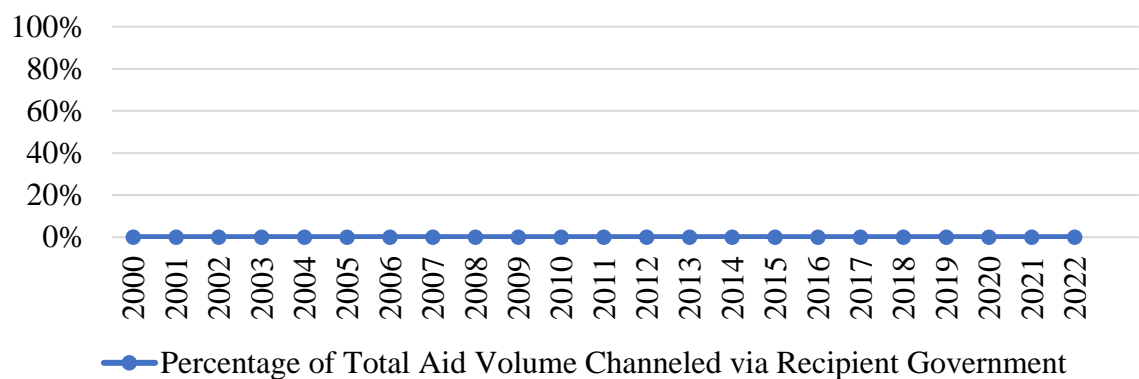
Source: Statistics Sweden

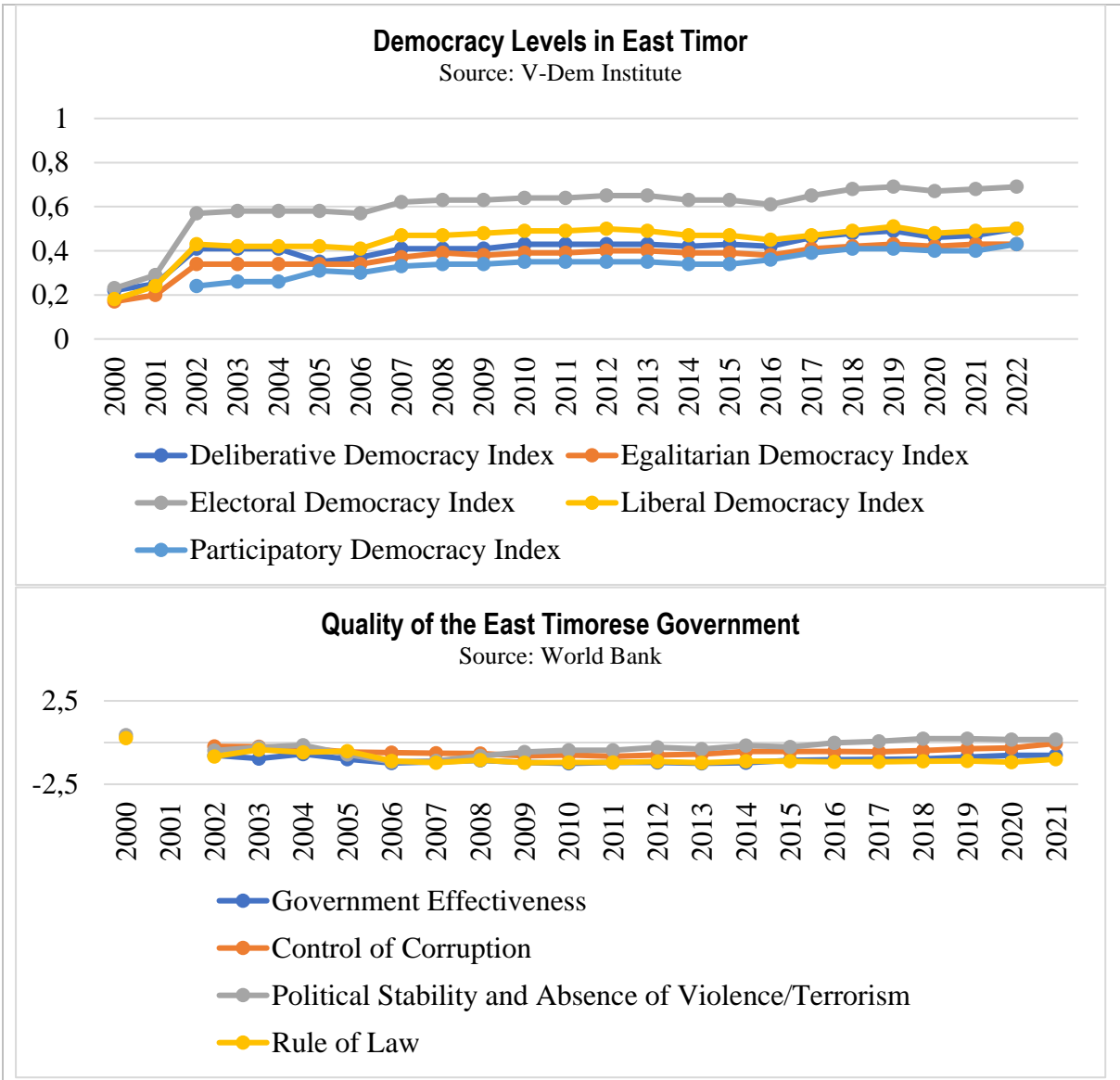


### East Timor

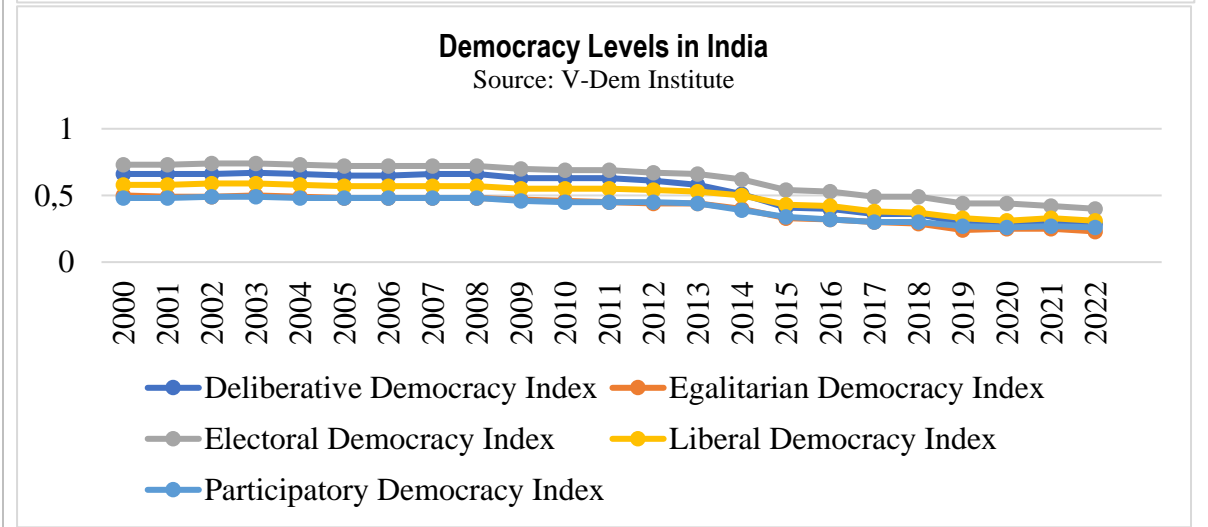
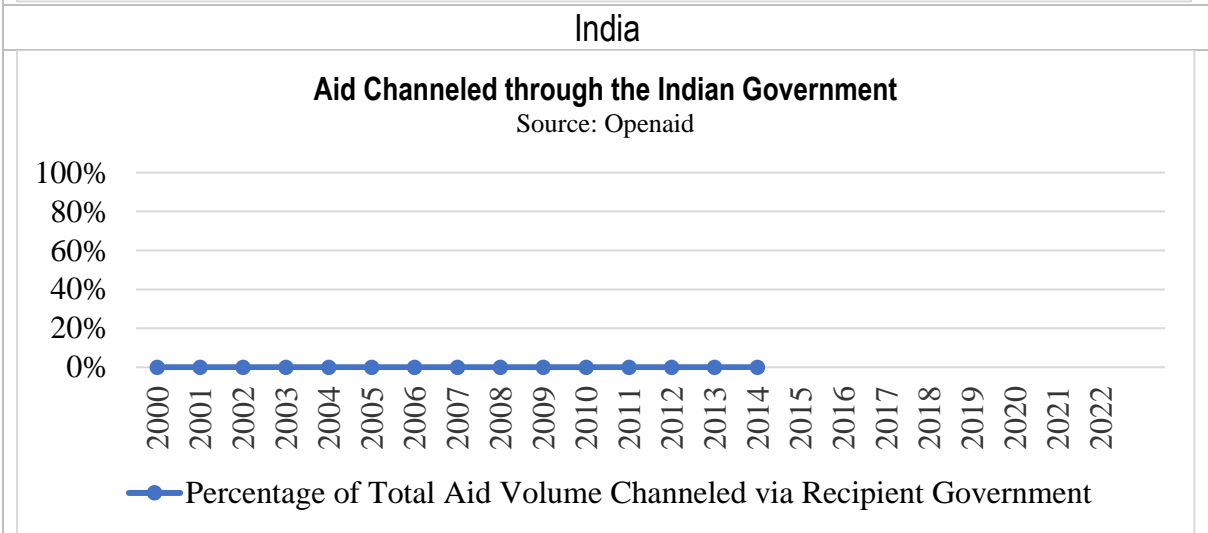
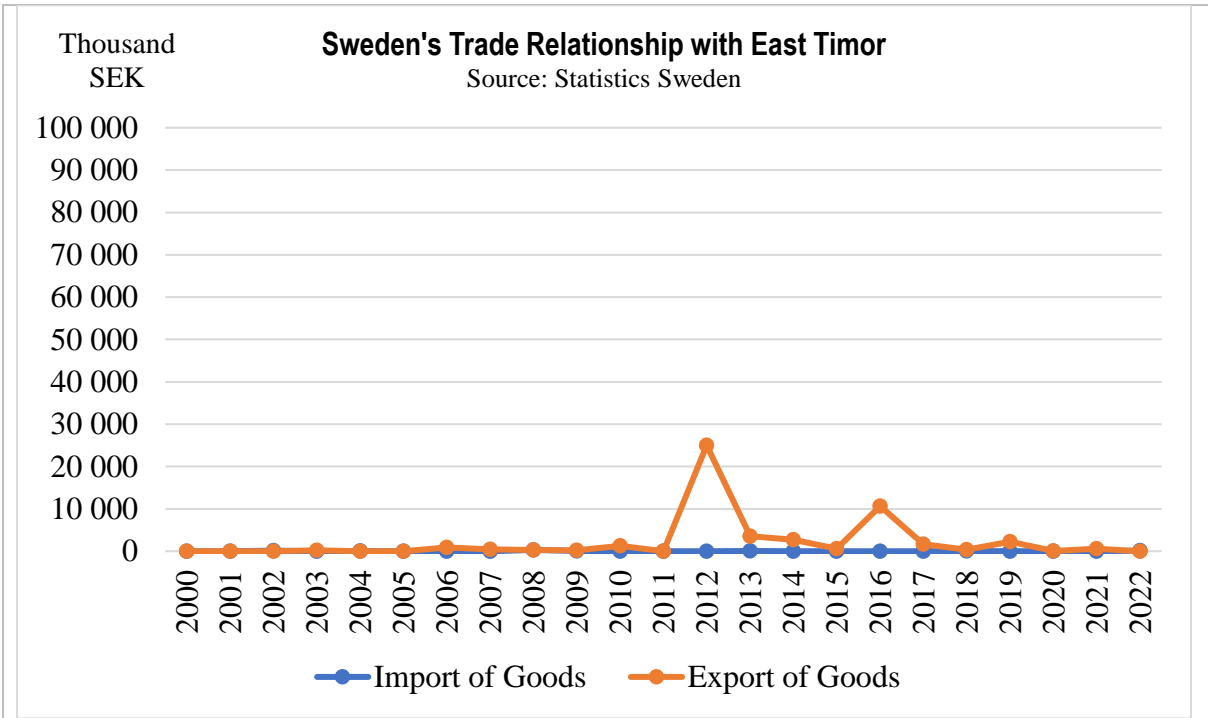
#### Aid Channeled through the East Timorese Government

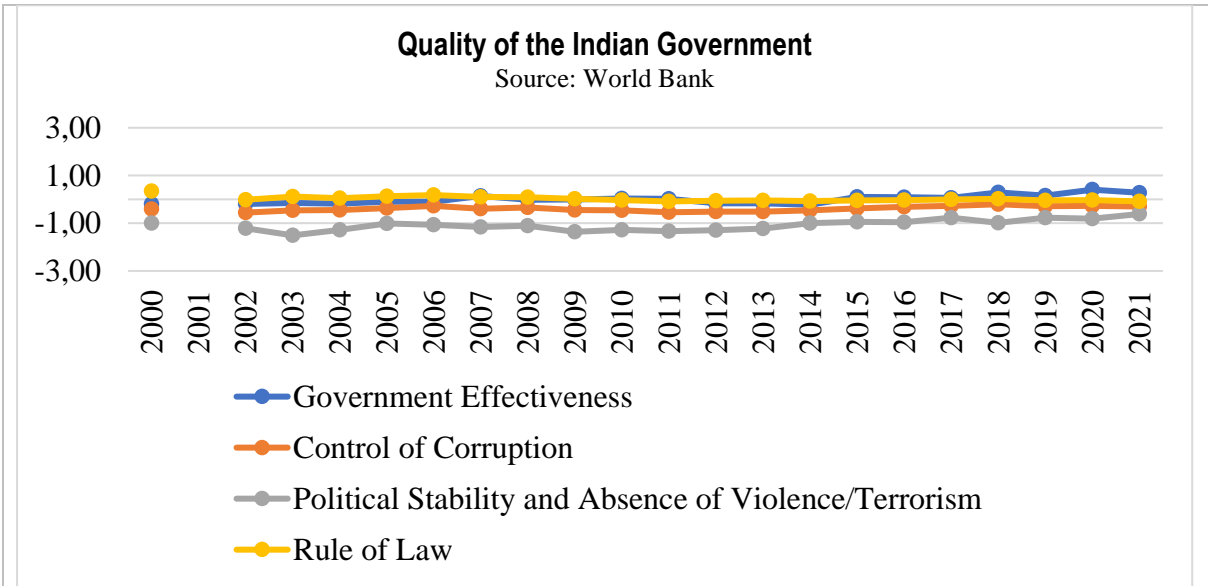
Source: Openaid





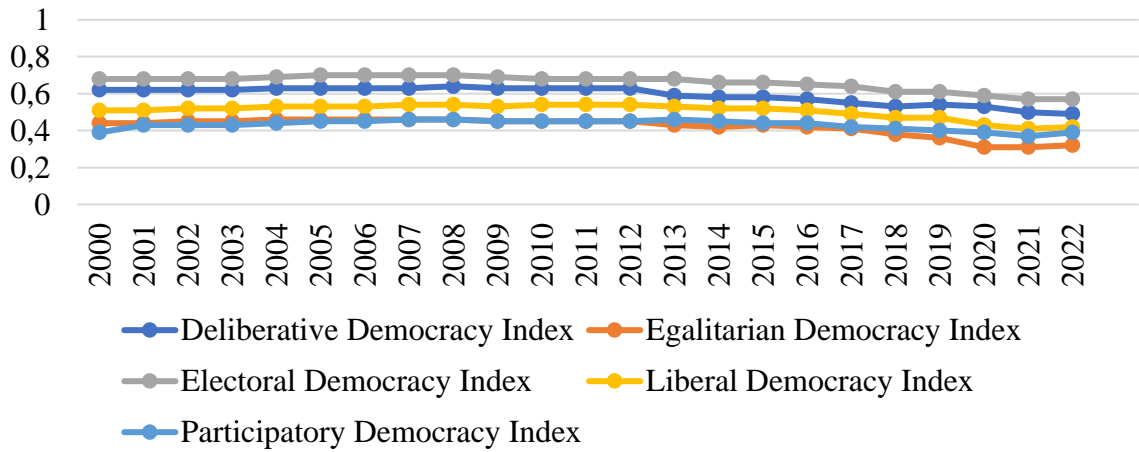






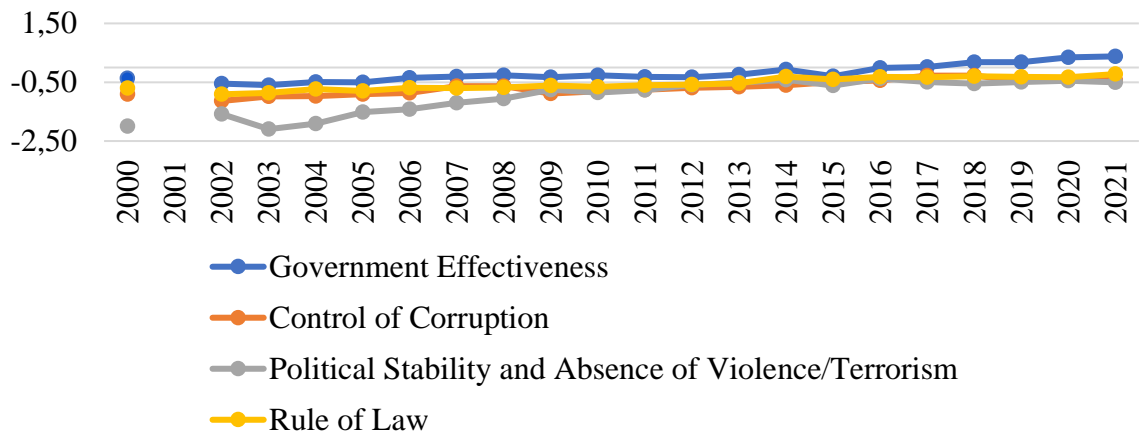
### Democracy Levels in Indonesia

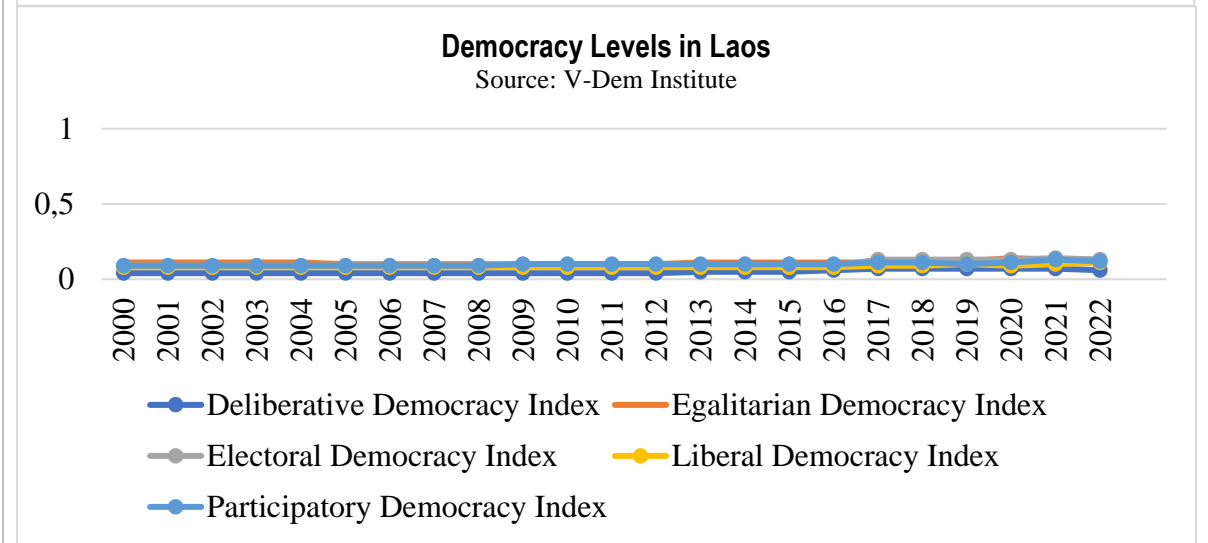
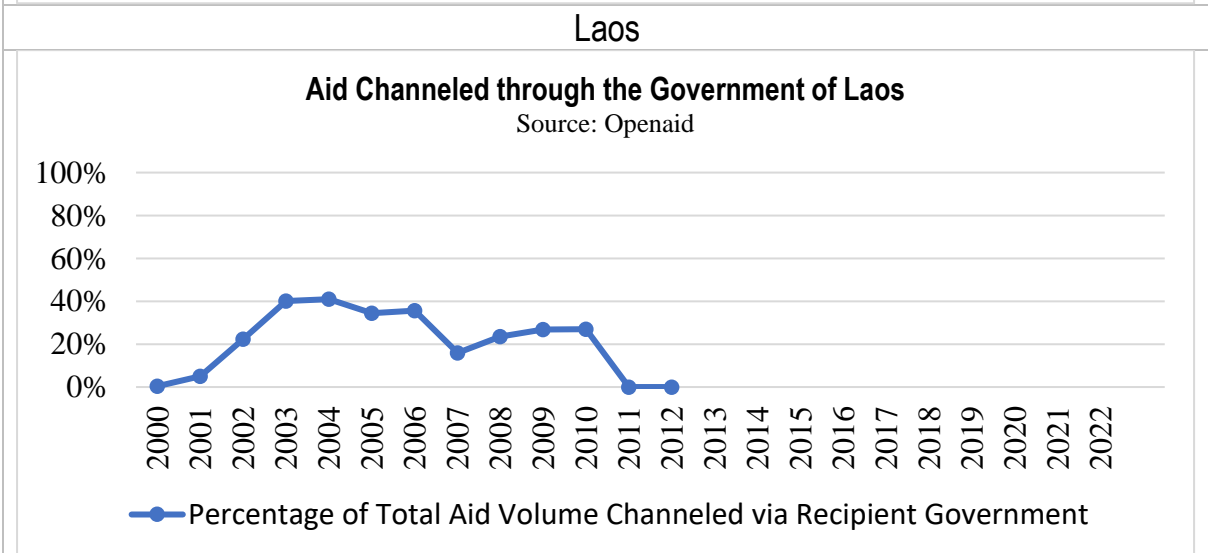
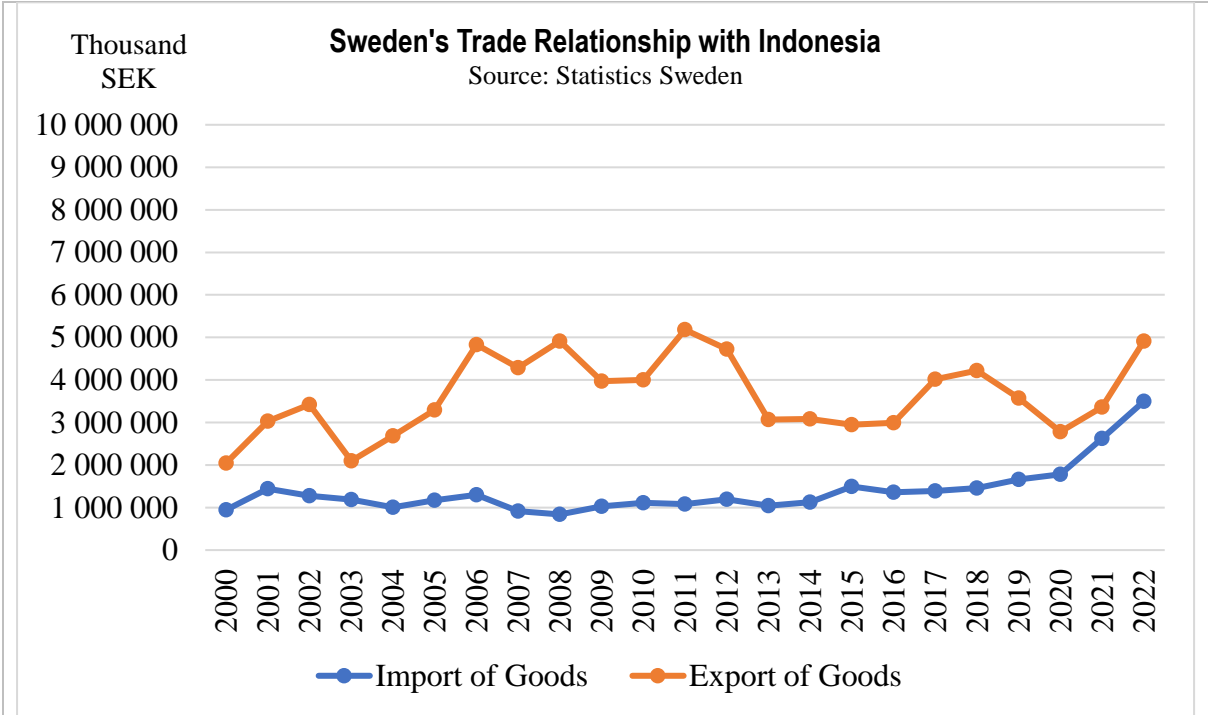
Source: V-Dem Institute

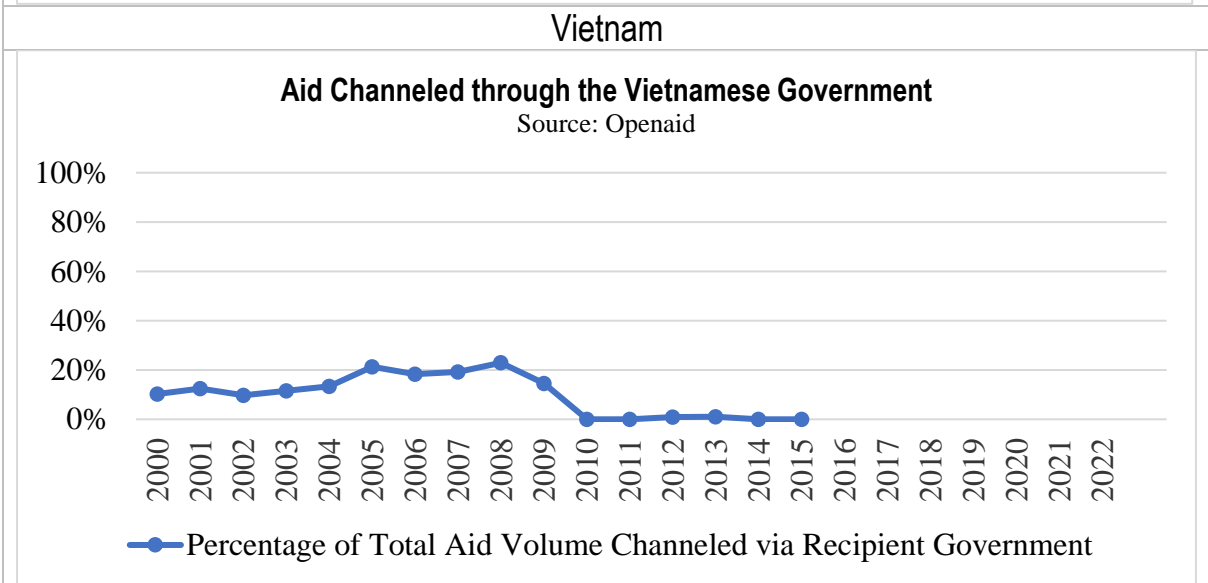
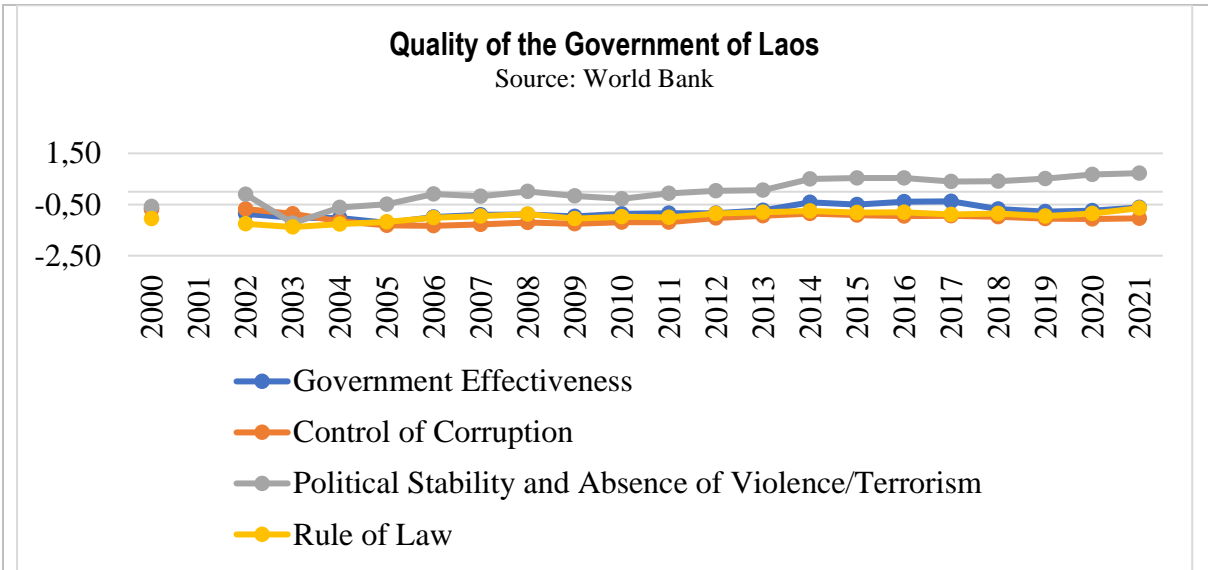


### Quality of the Indonesian Government

Source: World Bank

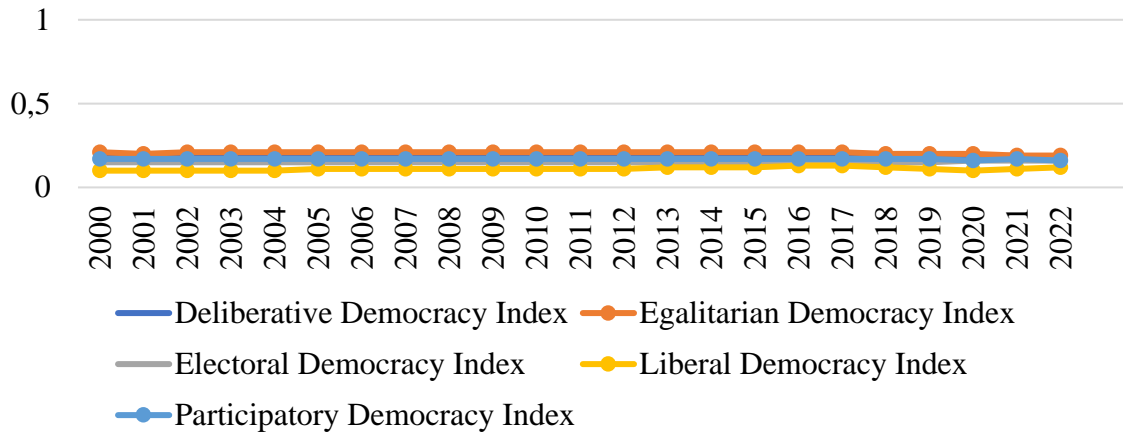






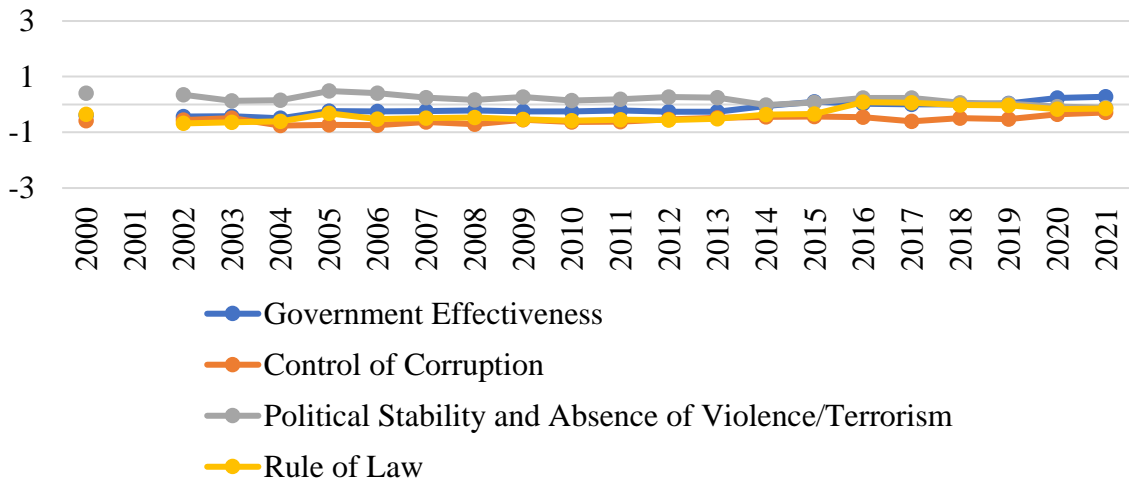
### Democracy Levels in Vietnam

Source: V-Dem Institute



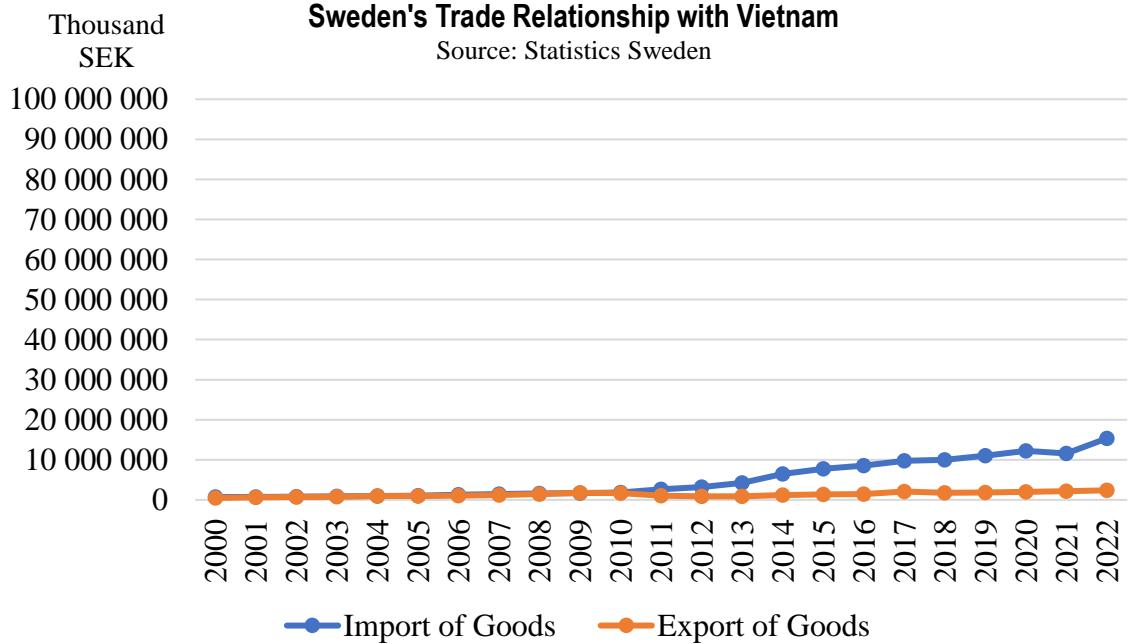
### Quality of the Vietnamese Government

Source: World Bank



### Sweden's Trade Relationship with Vietnam

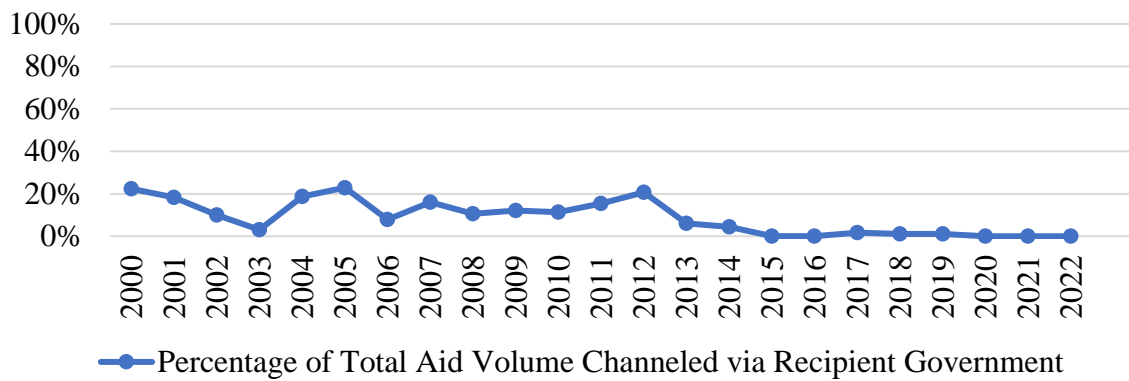
Source: Statistics Sweden



## Guatemala

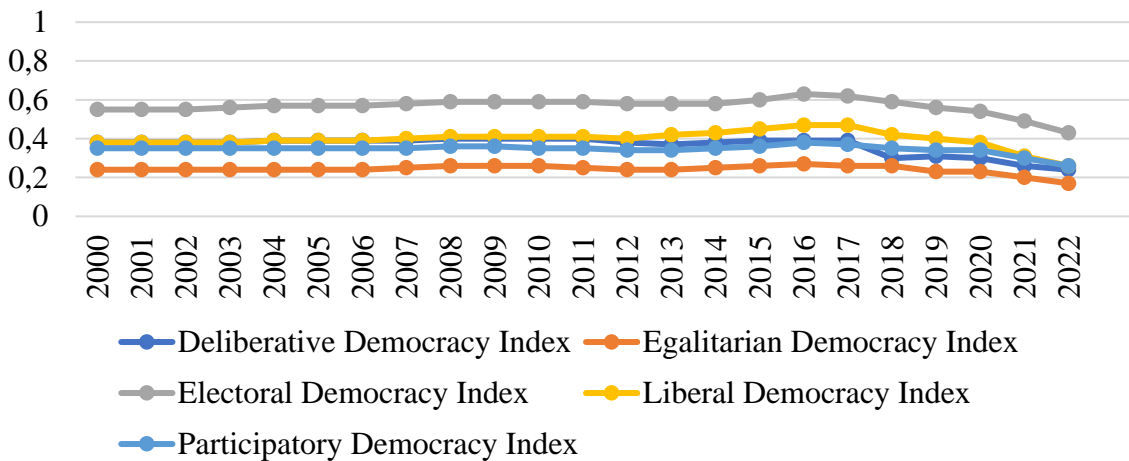
### Aid Channeled through the Guatemalan Government

Source: Openaid



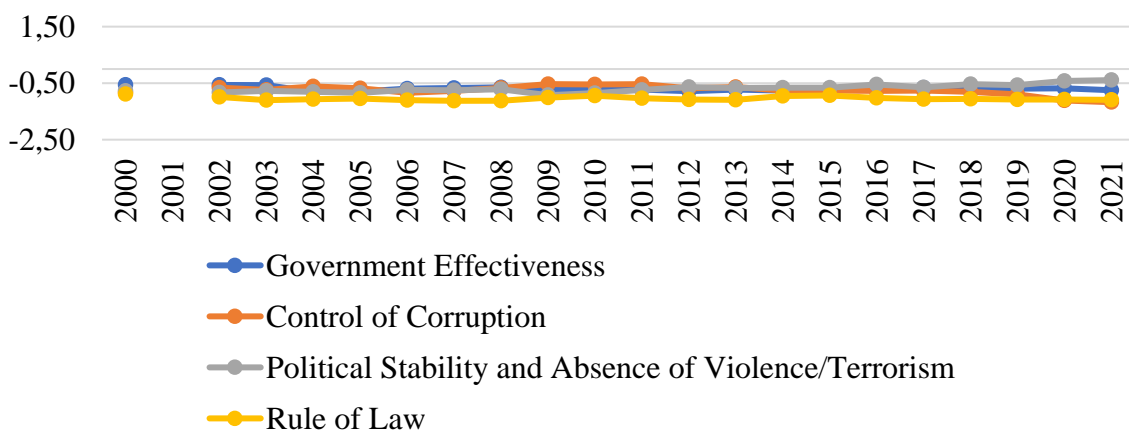
### Democracy Levels in Guatemala

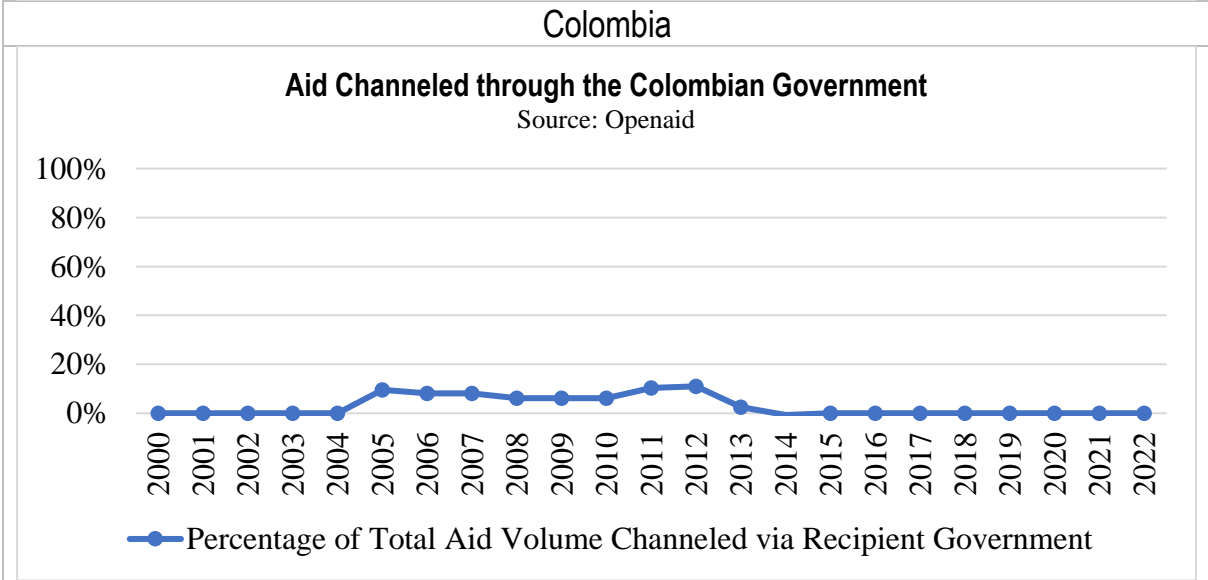
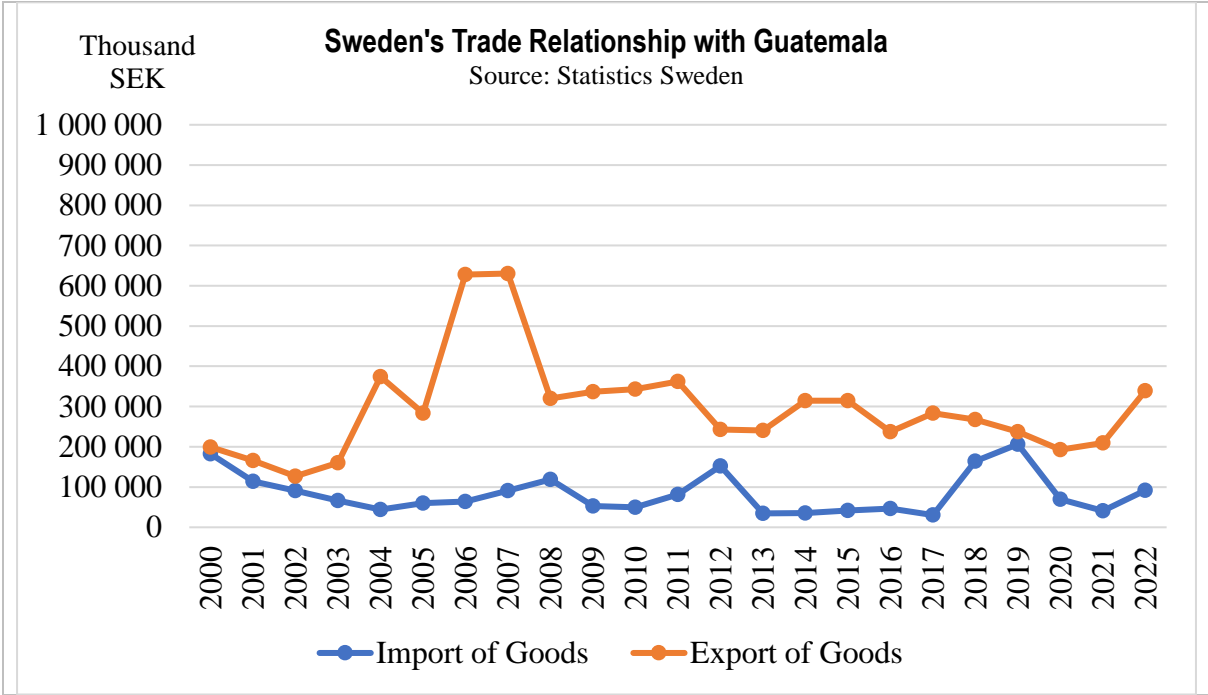
Source: V-Dem Institute



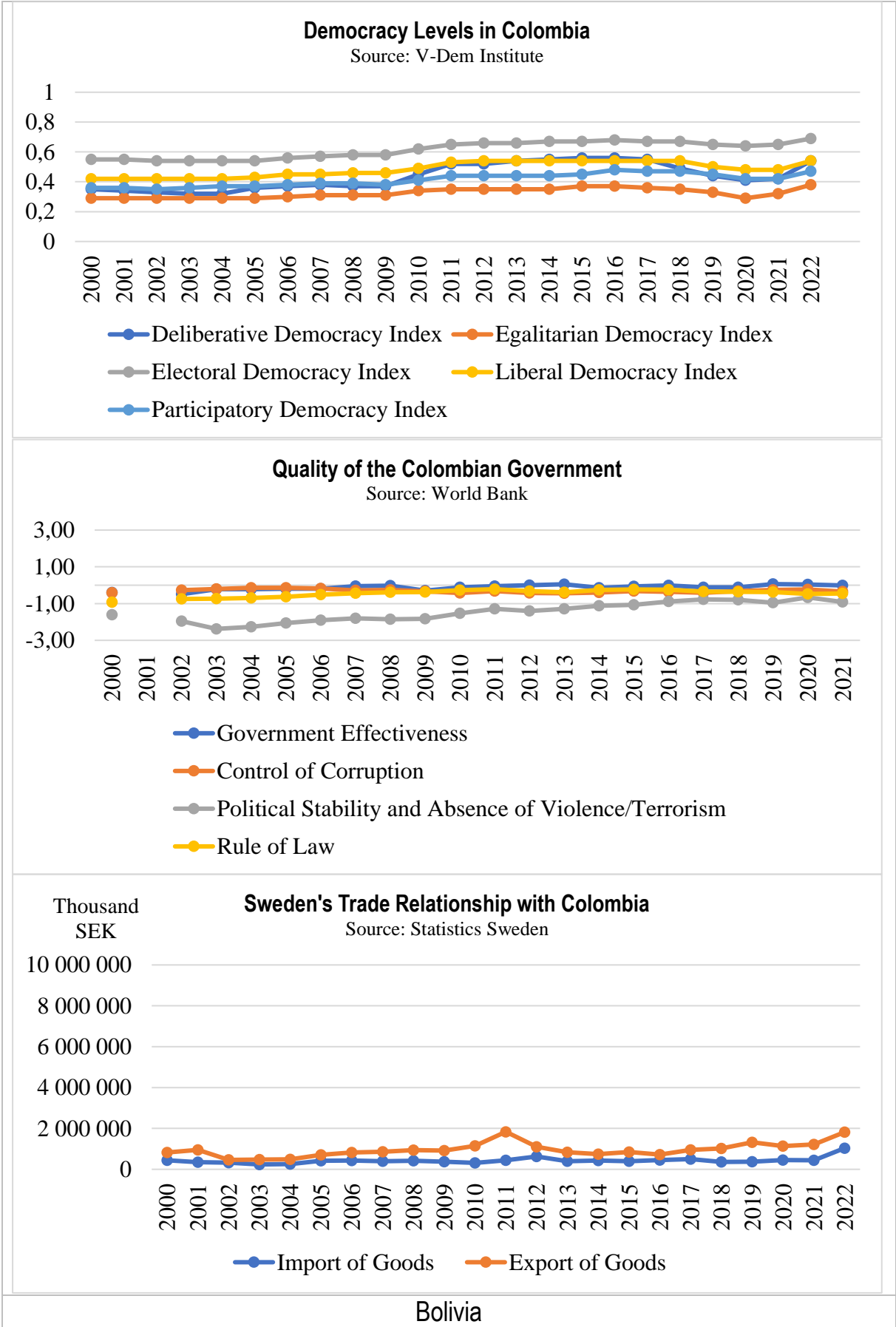
### Quality of the Guatemalan Government

Source: World Bank



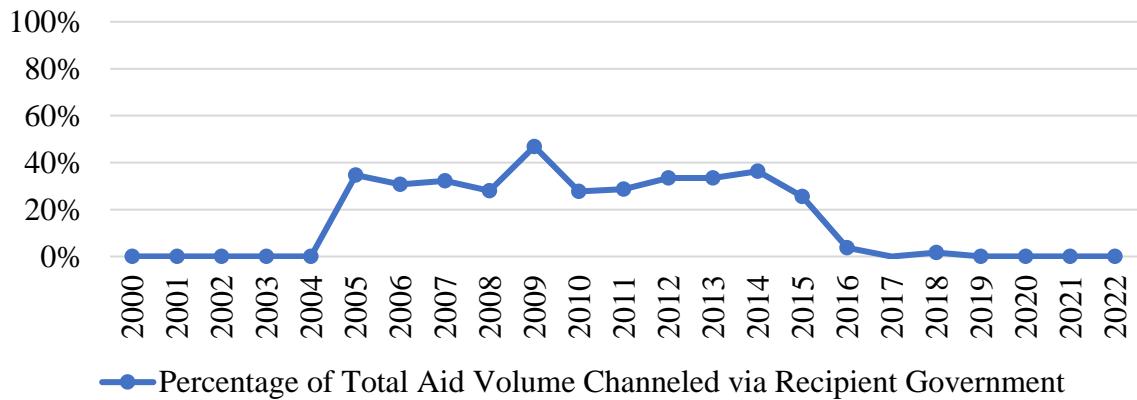






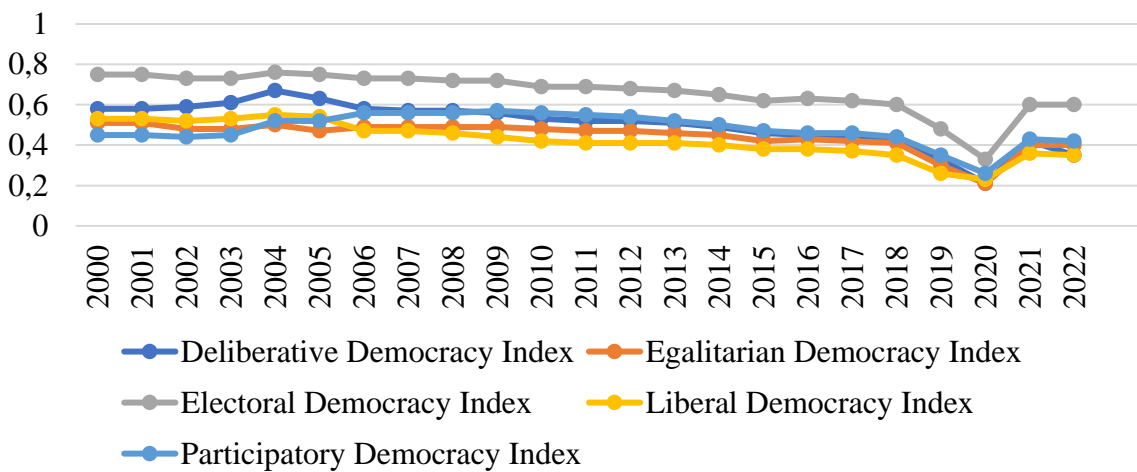
### Aid Channeled through the Bolivian Government

Source: Openaid



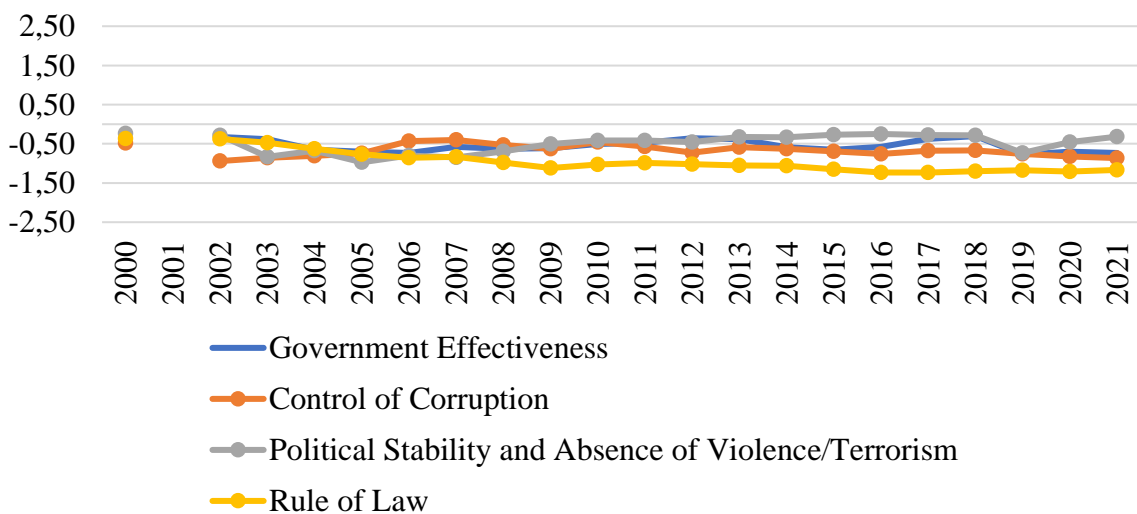
### Democracy Levels in Bolivia

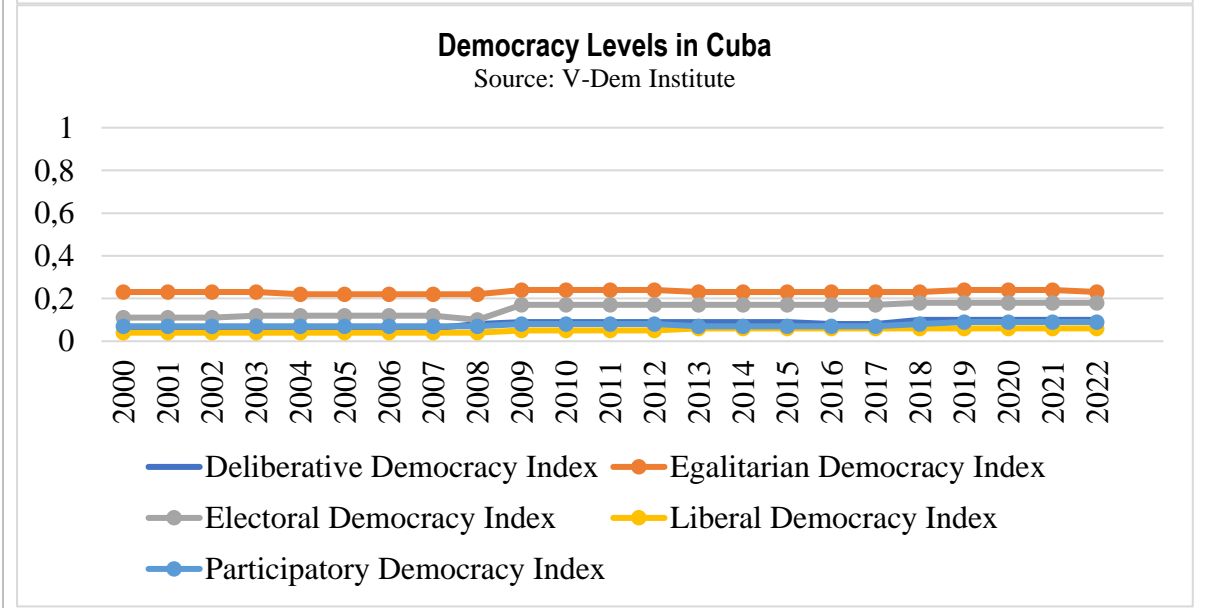
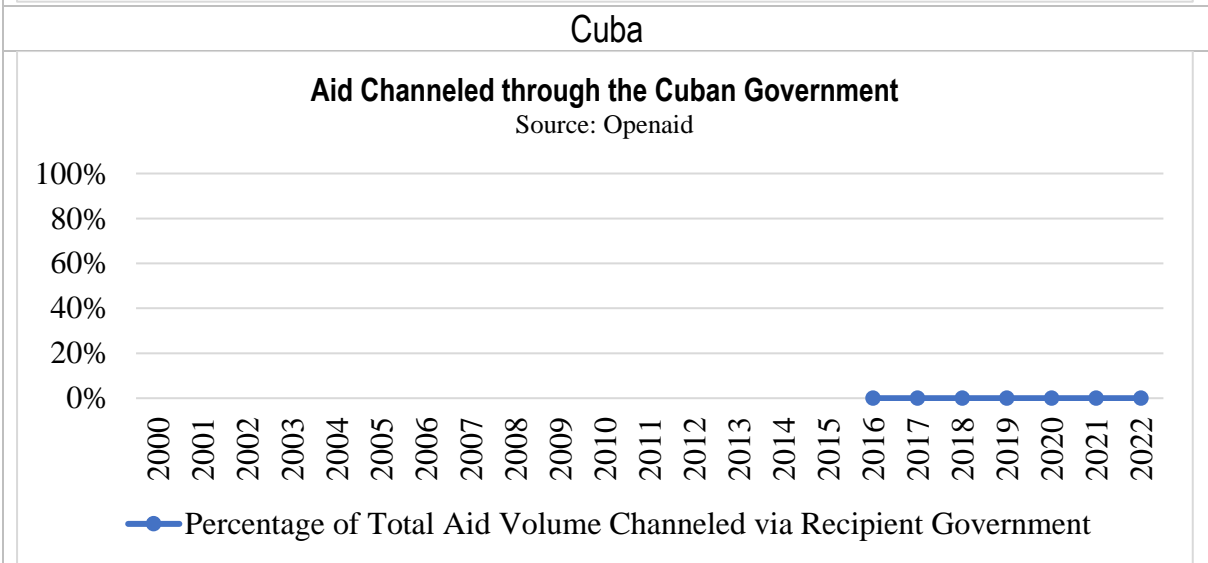
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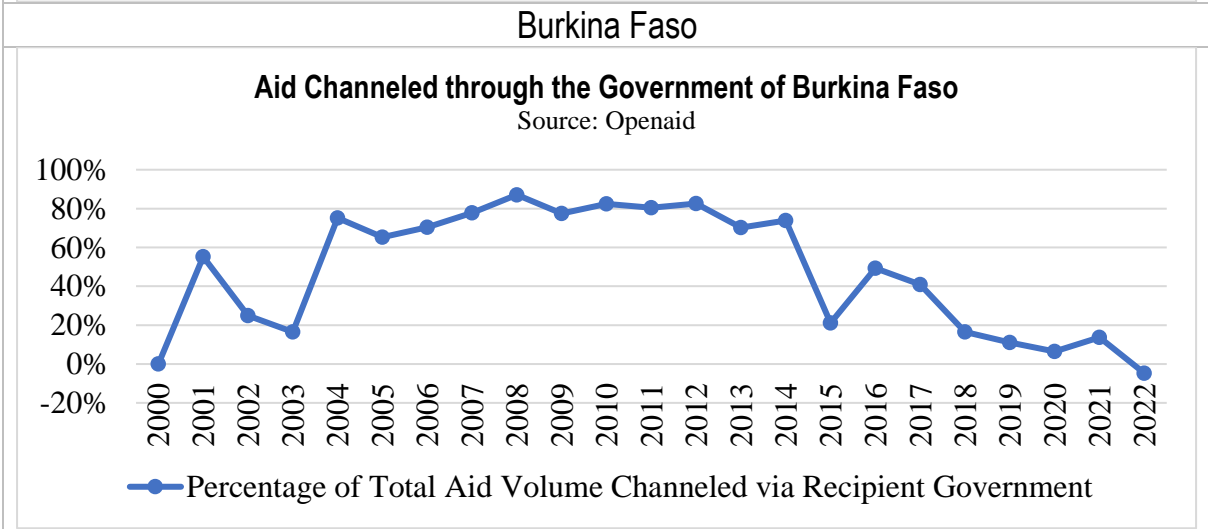
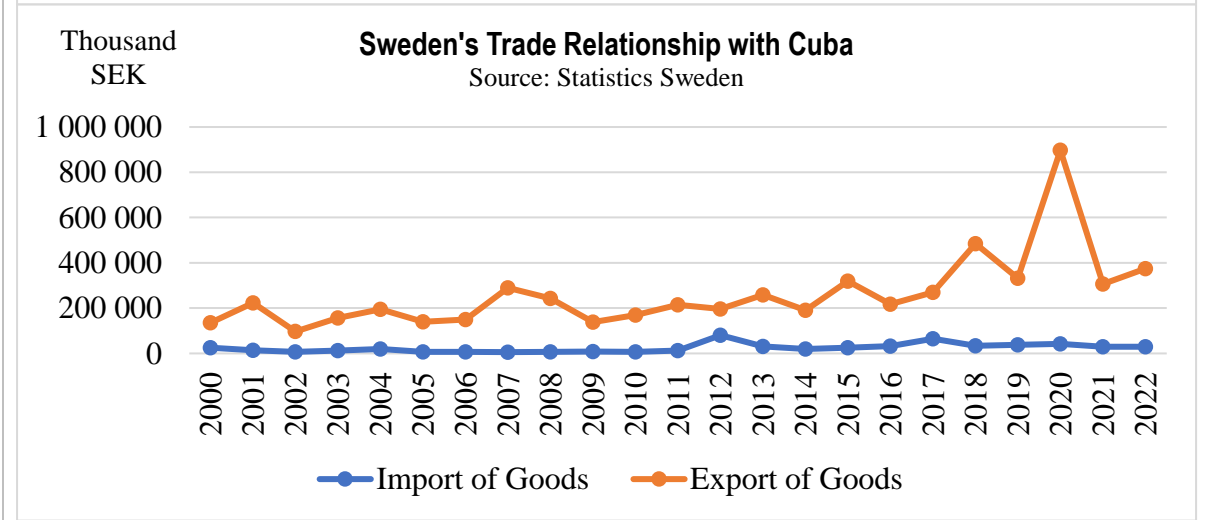
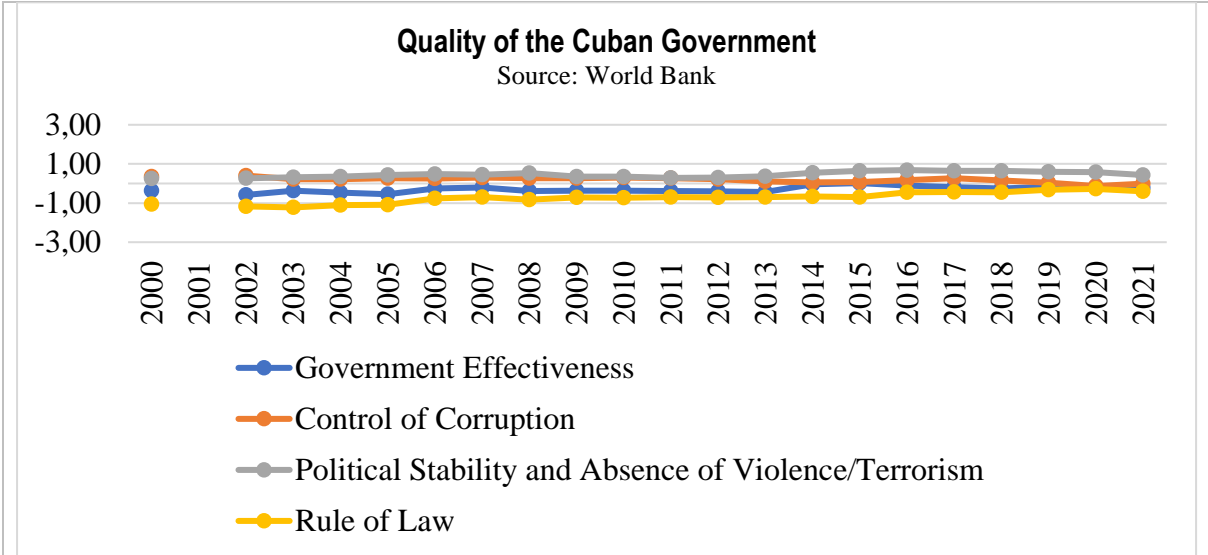


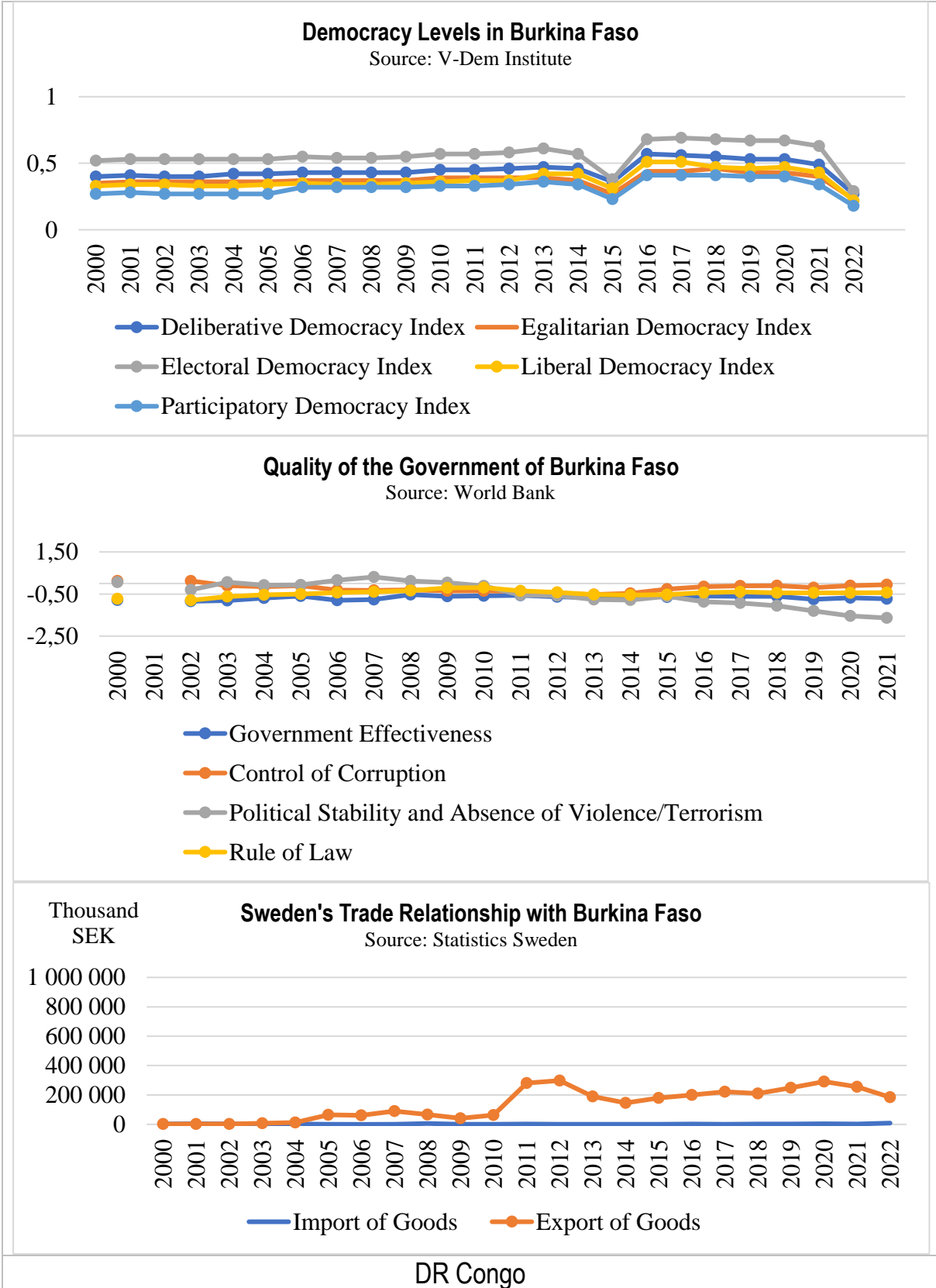
### Quality of the Bolivian Government

Source: World Bank





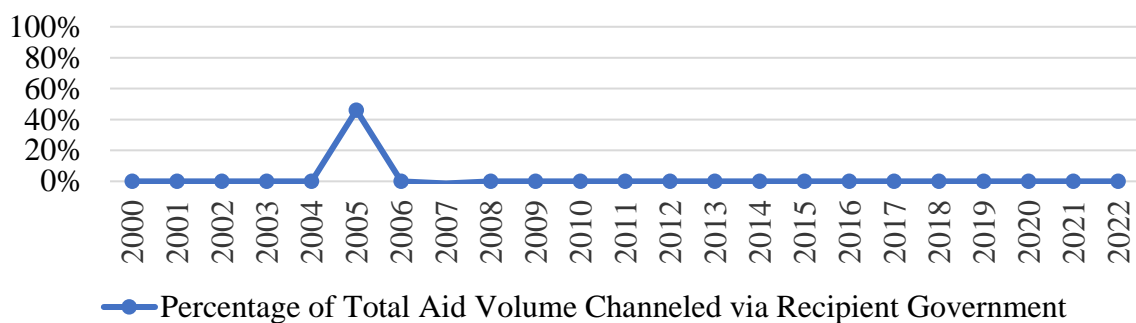




DR Congo

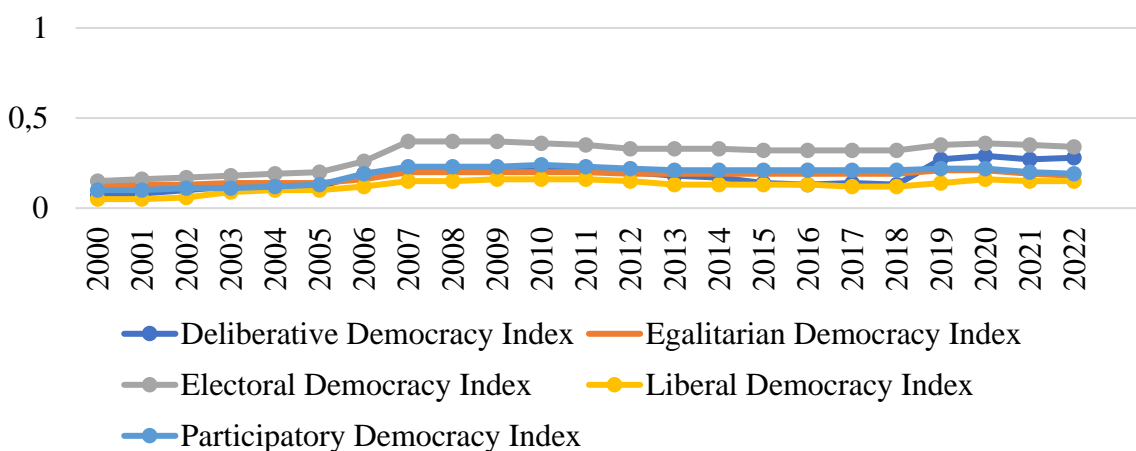
### Aid Channeled through the Government of DR Congo

Source: Openaid



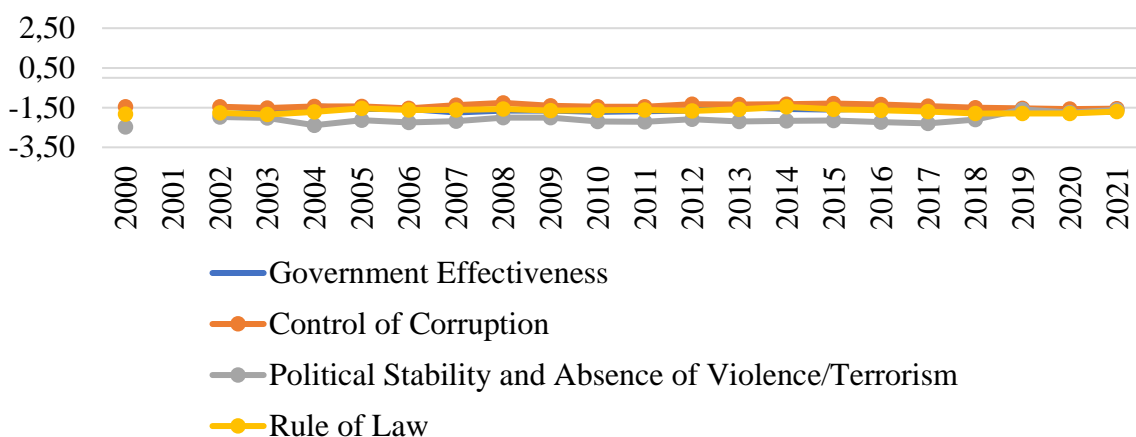
### Democracy Levels in DR Congo

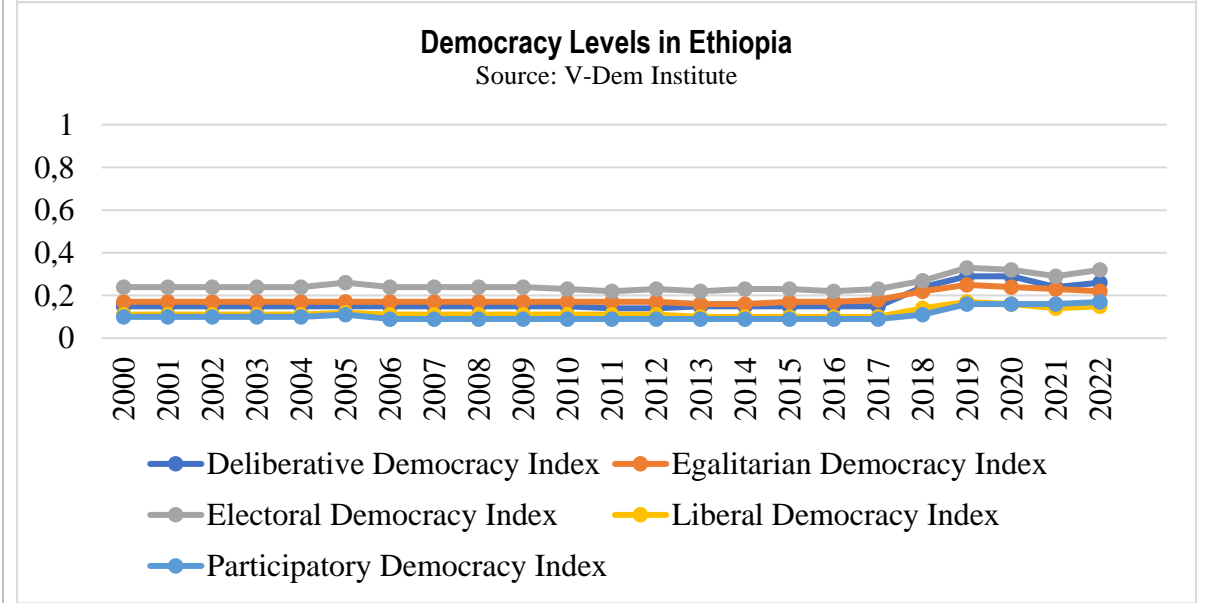
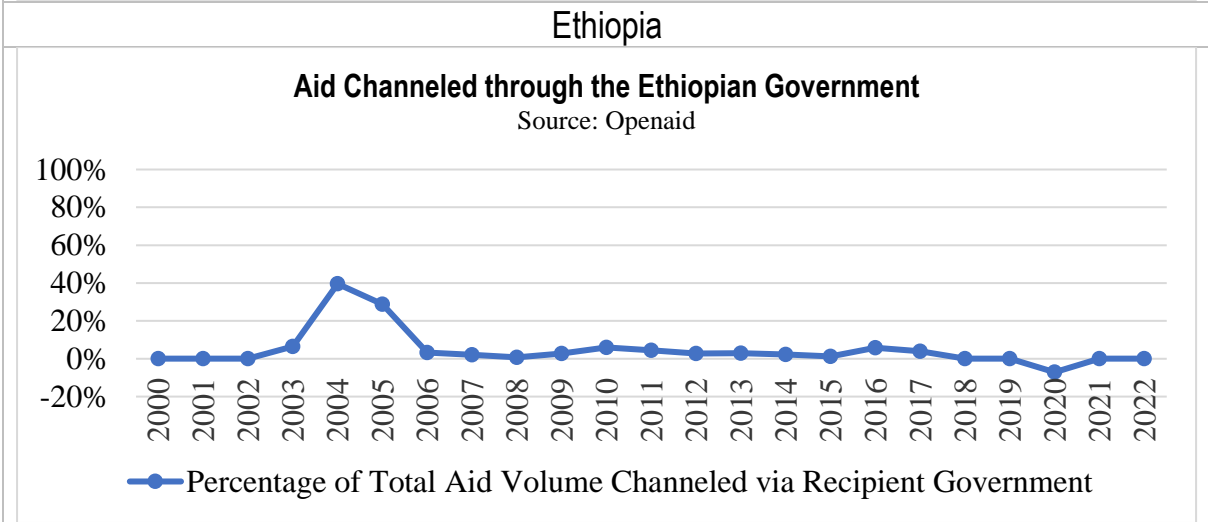
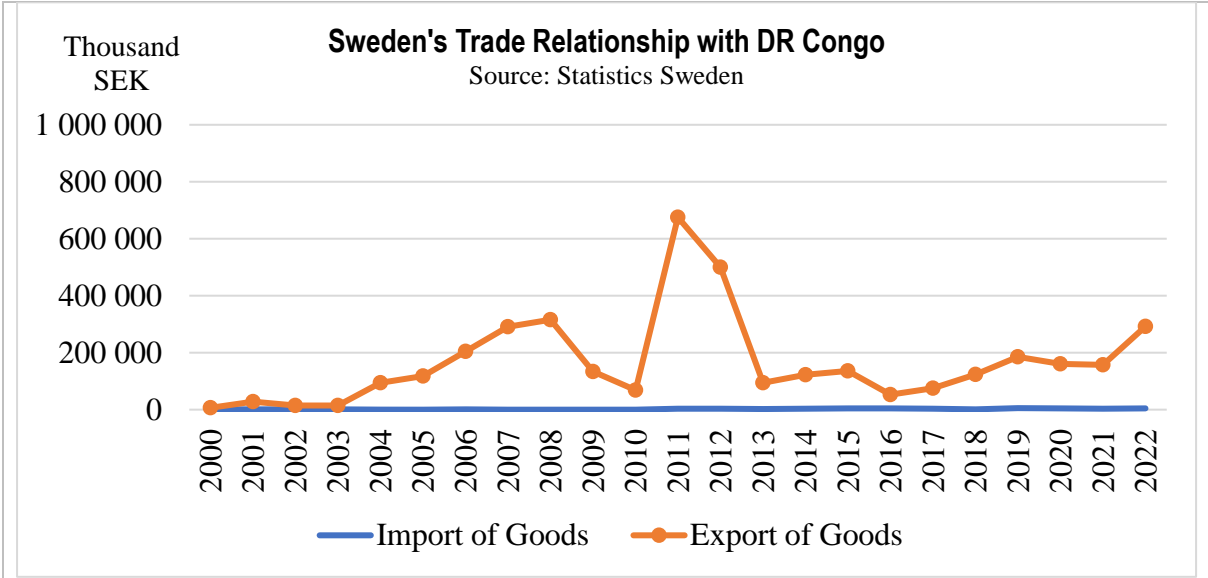
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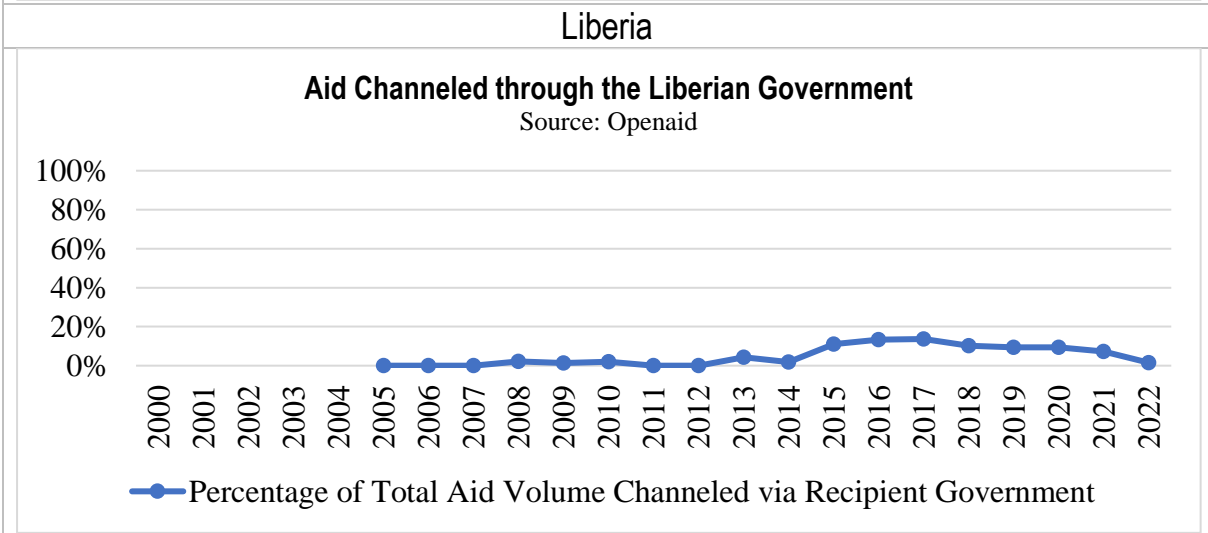
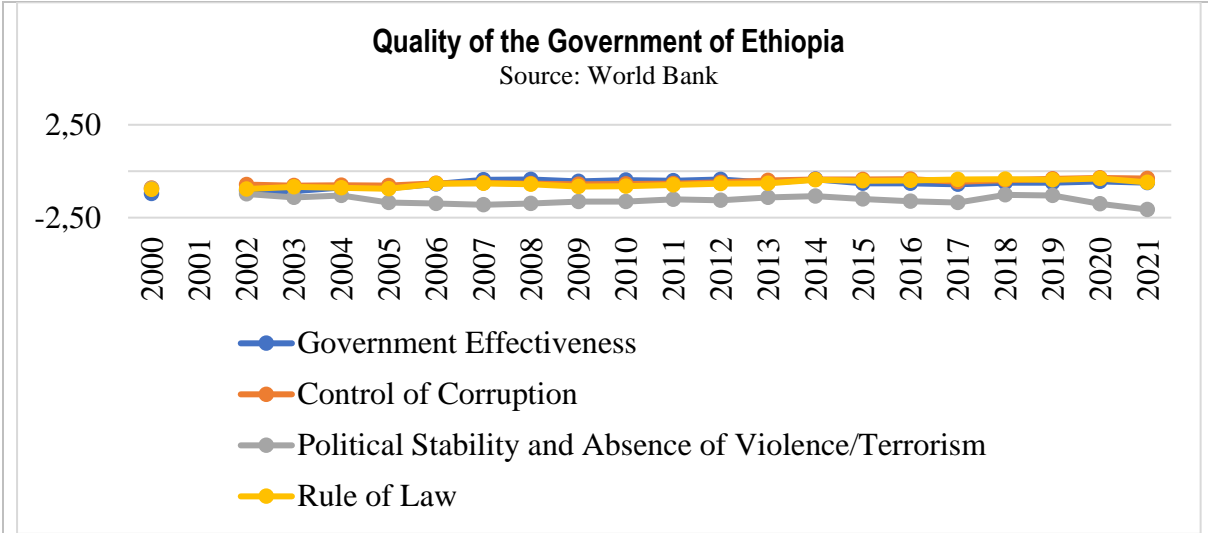


### Quality of the Government of DR Congo

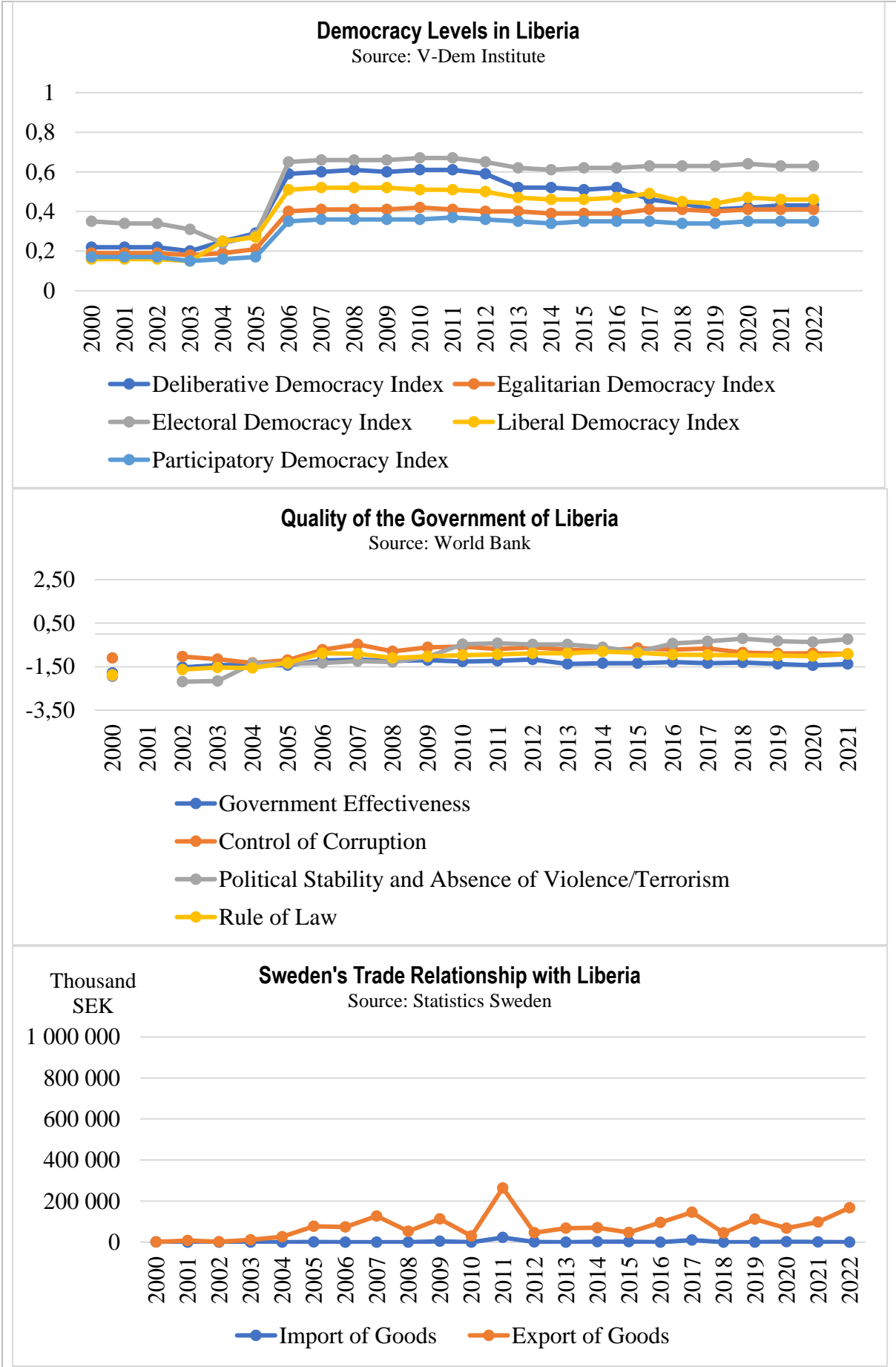
Source: World Bank







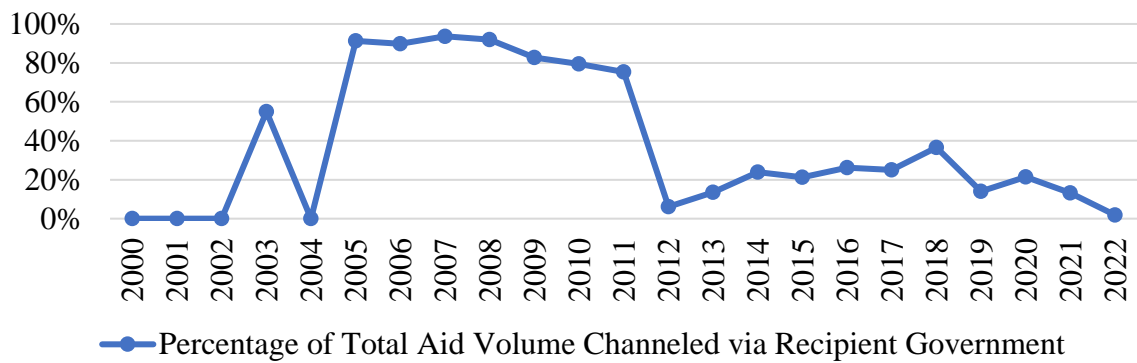




## Mali

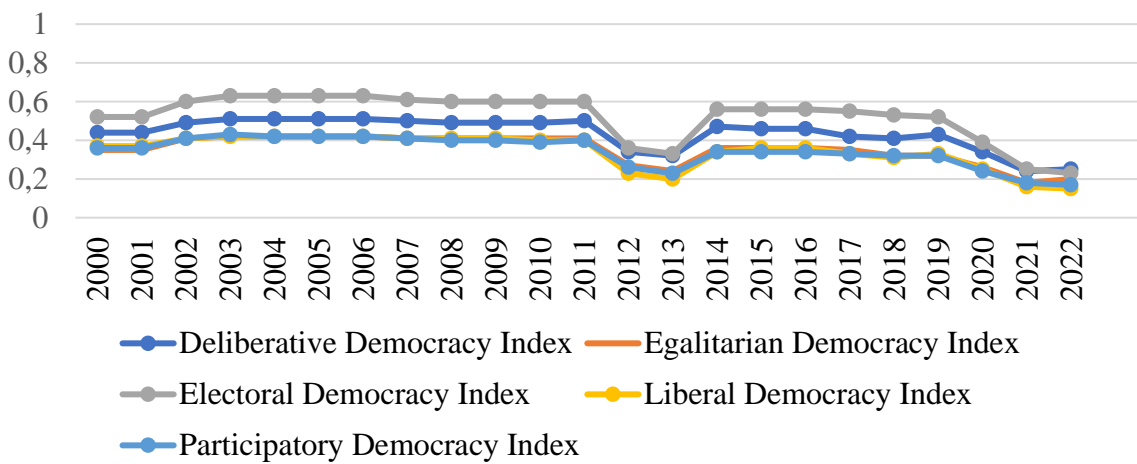
### Aid Channeled through the Malian Government

Source: Openaid



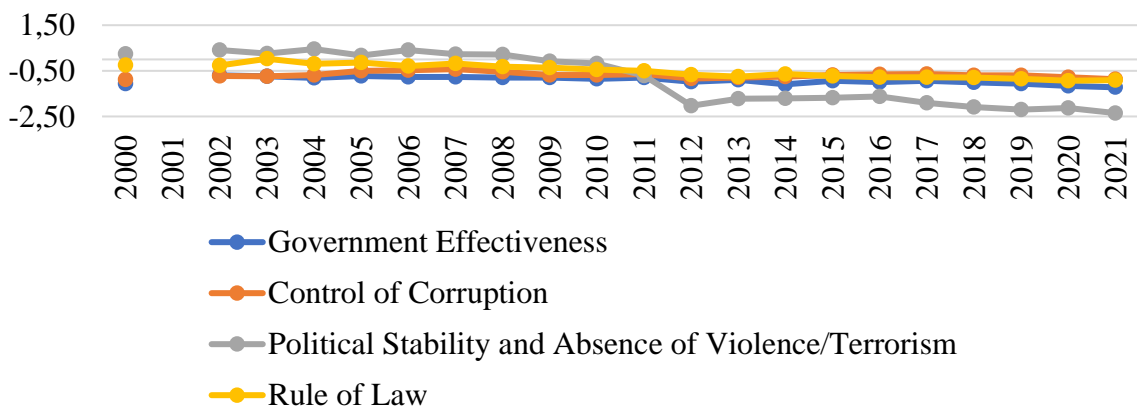
### Democracy Levels in Mali

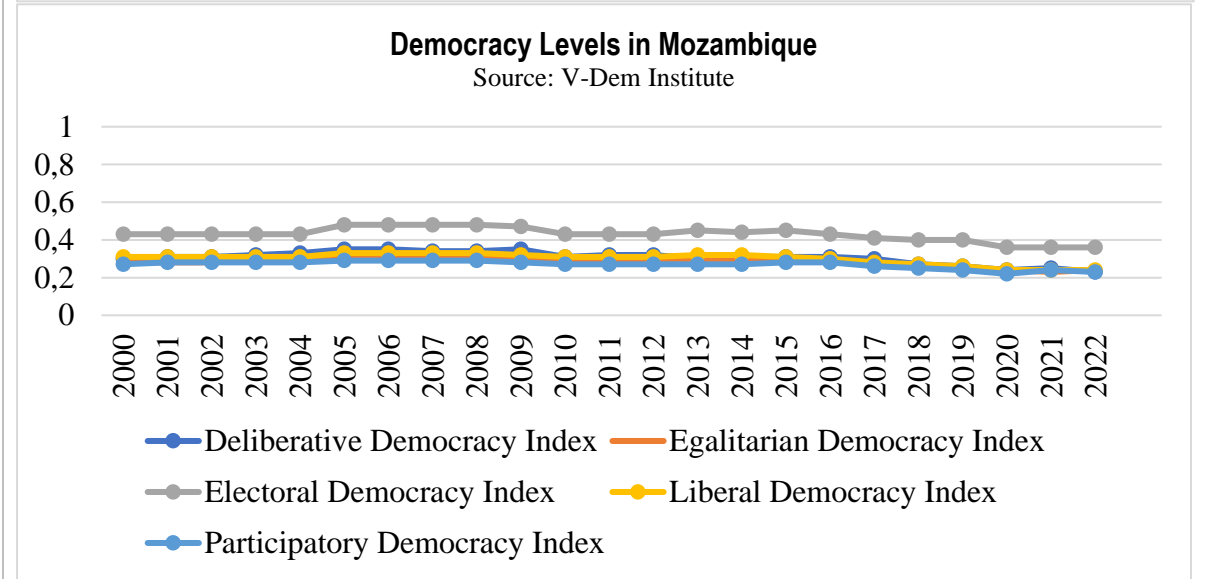
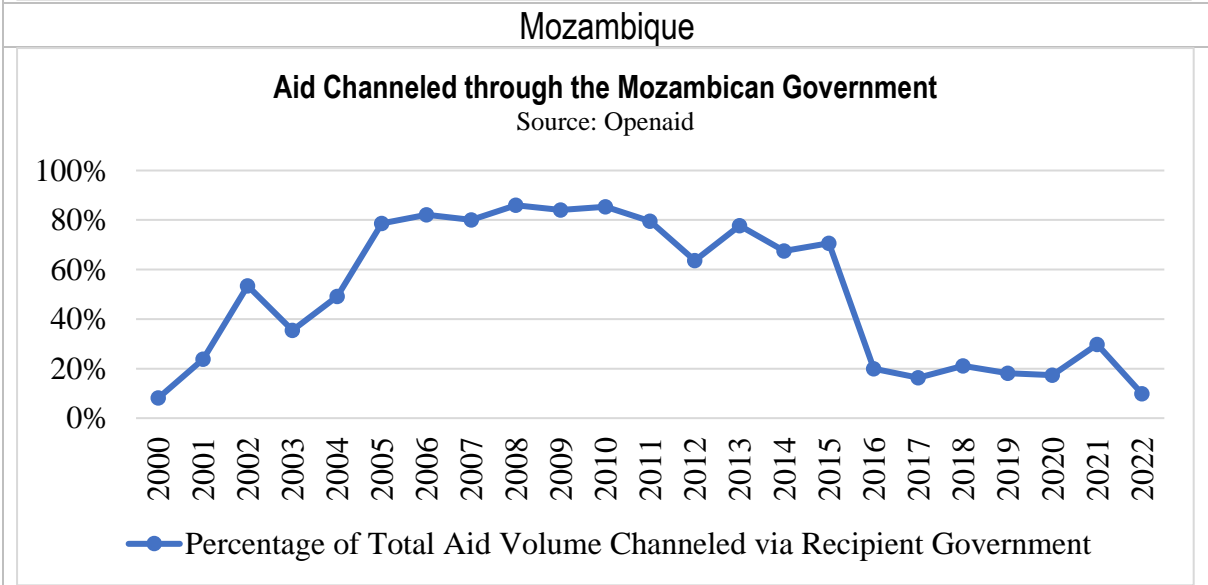
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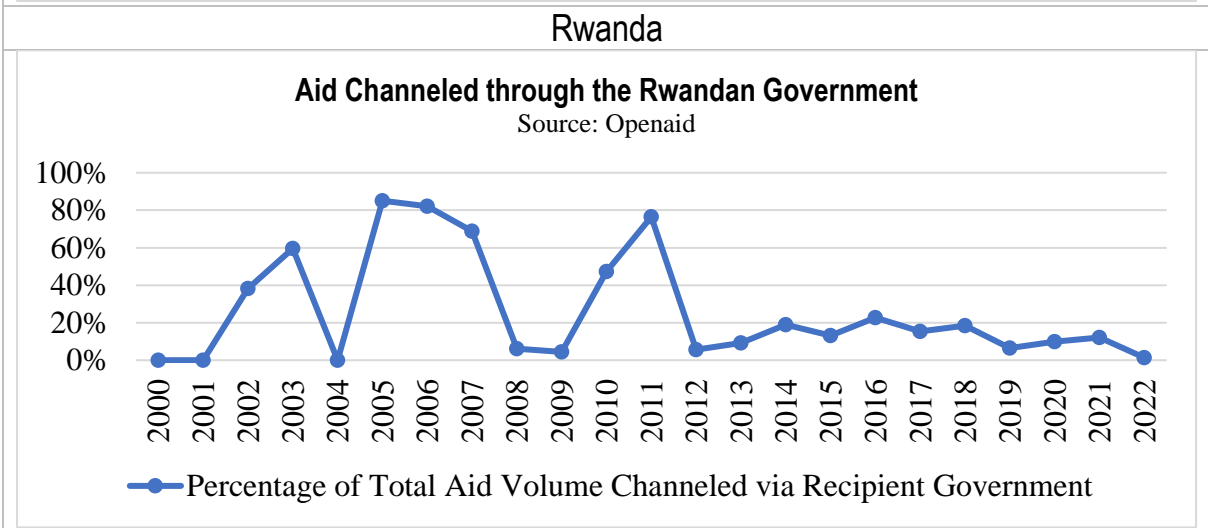
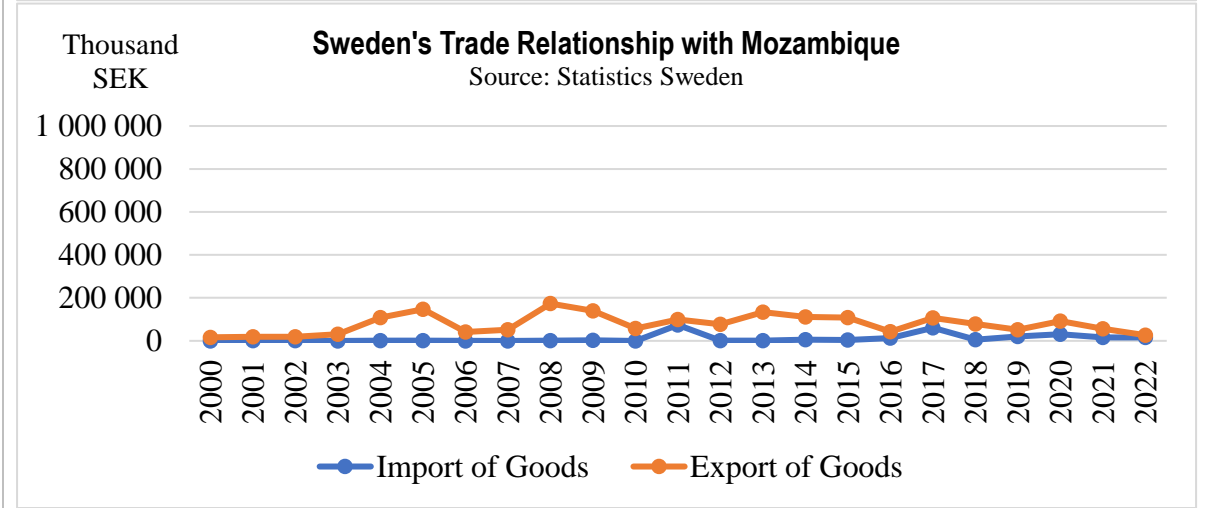
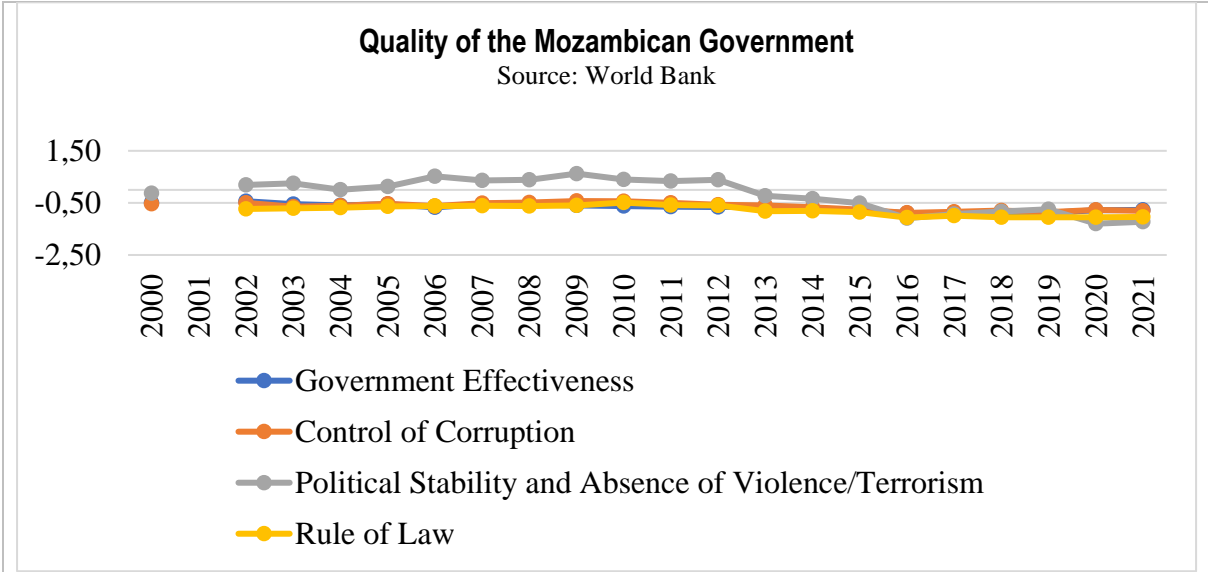


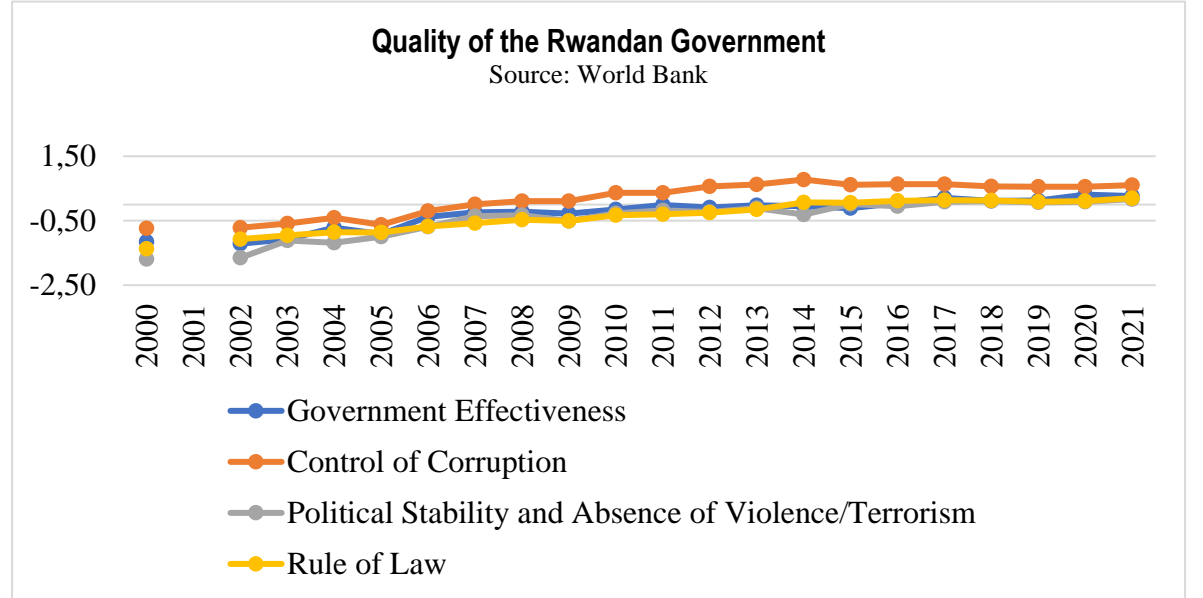
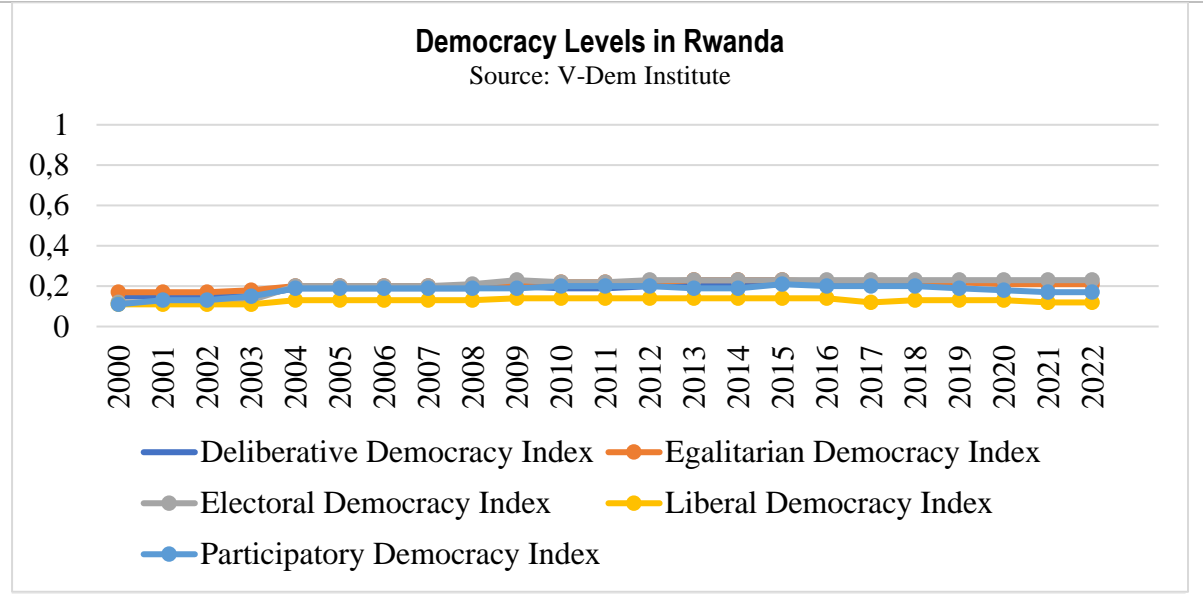
### Quality of the Malian Government

Source: World Bank





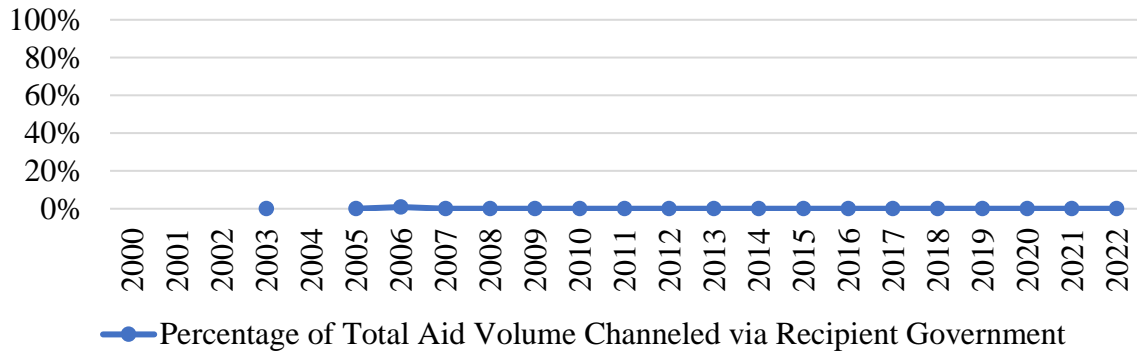




Somalia

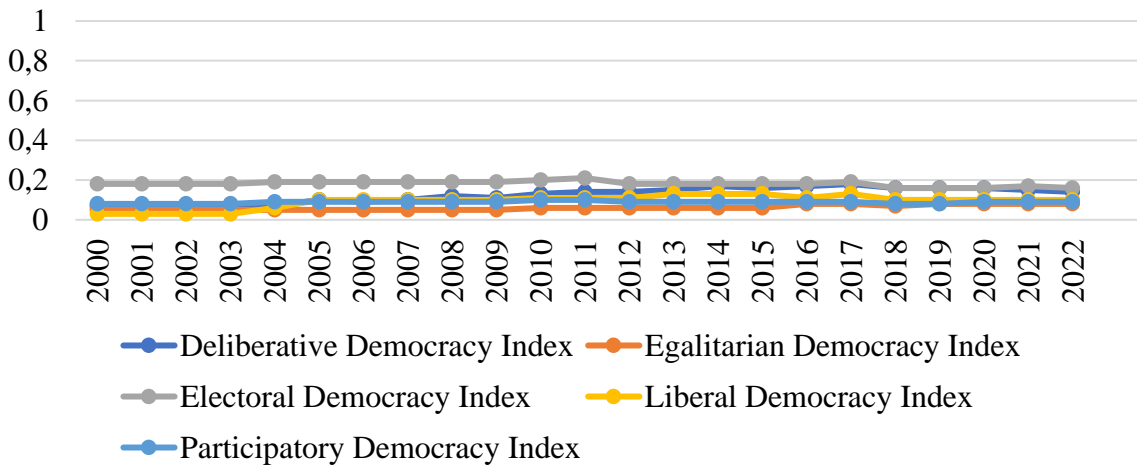
### Aid Channeled through the Somali Government

Source: Openaid



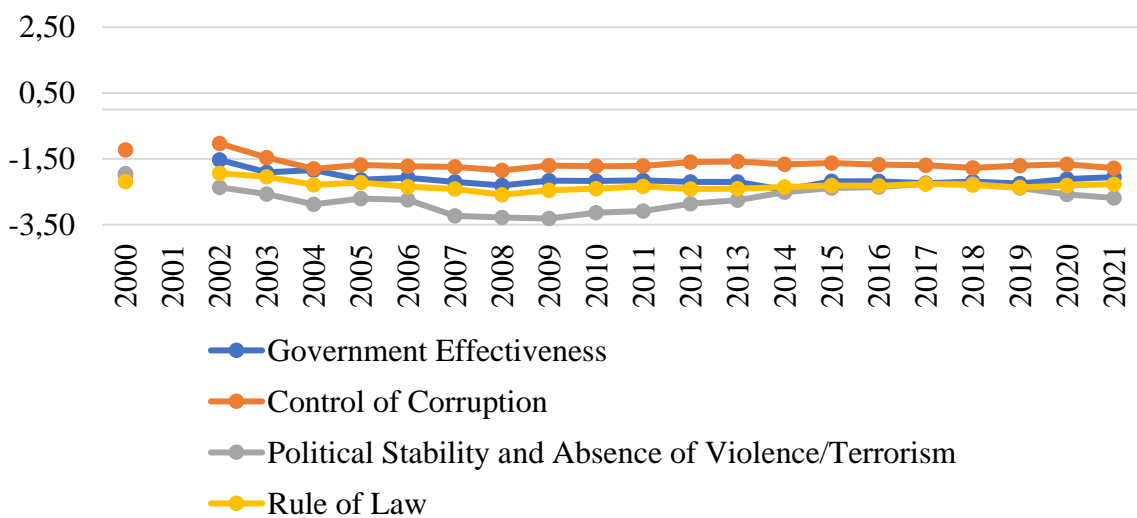
### Democracy Levels in Somalia

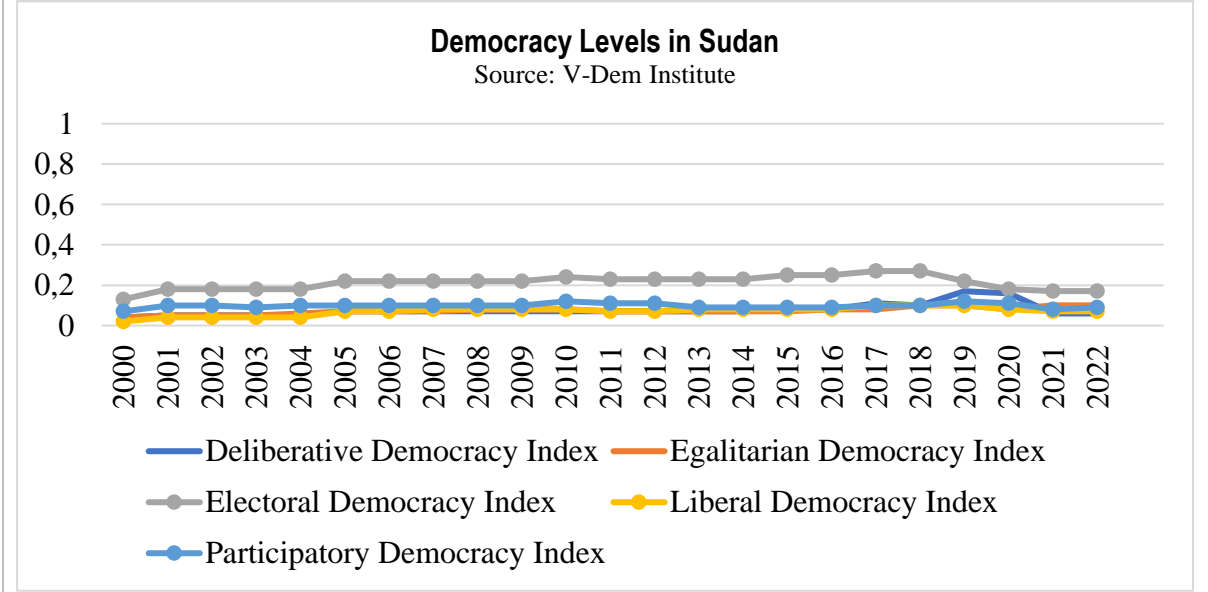
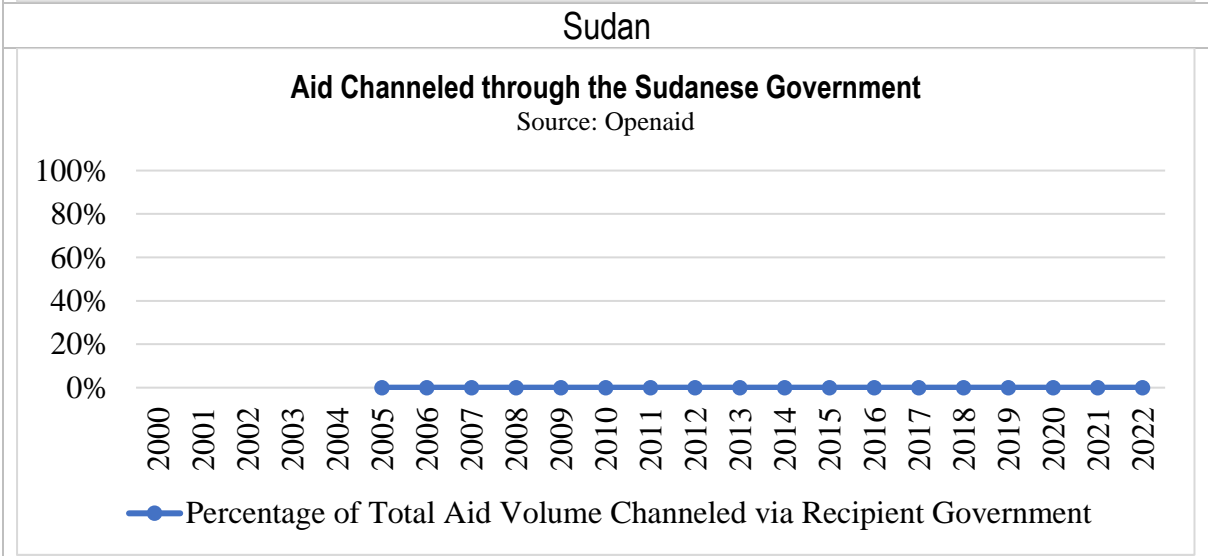
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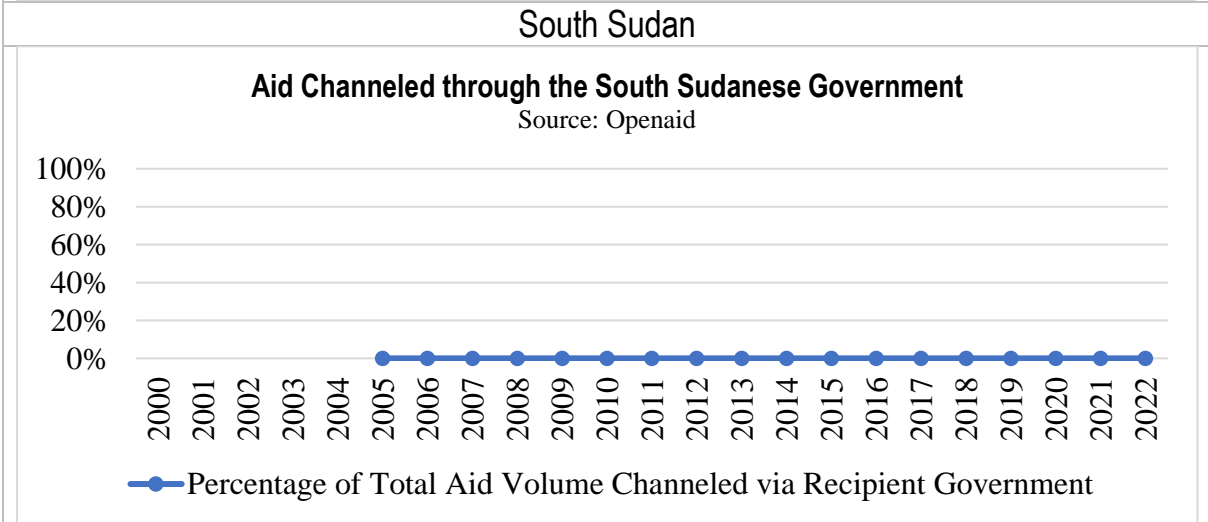
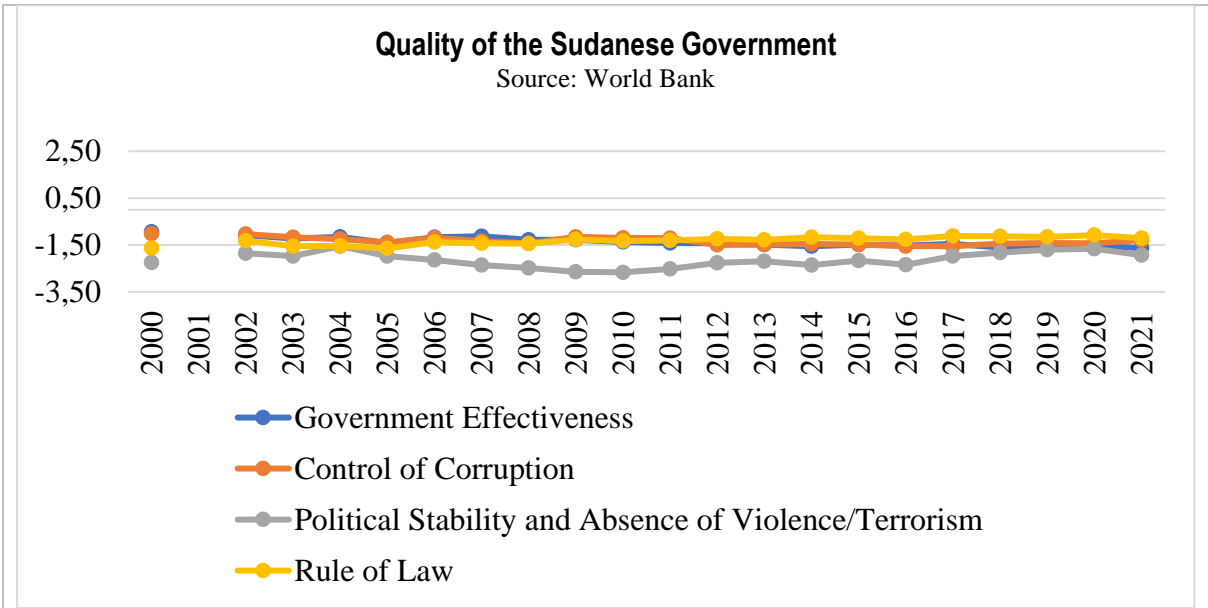


### Quality of the Somali Government

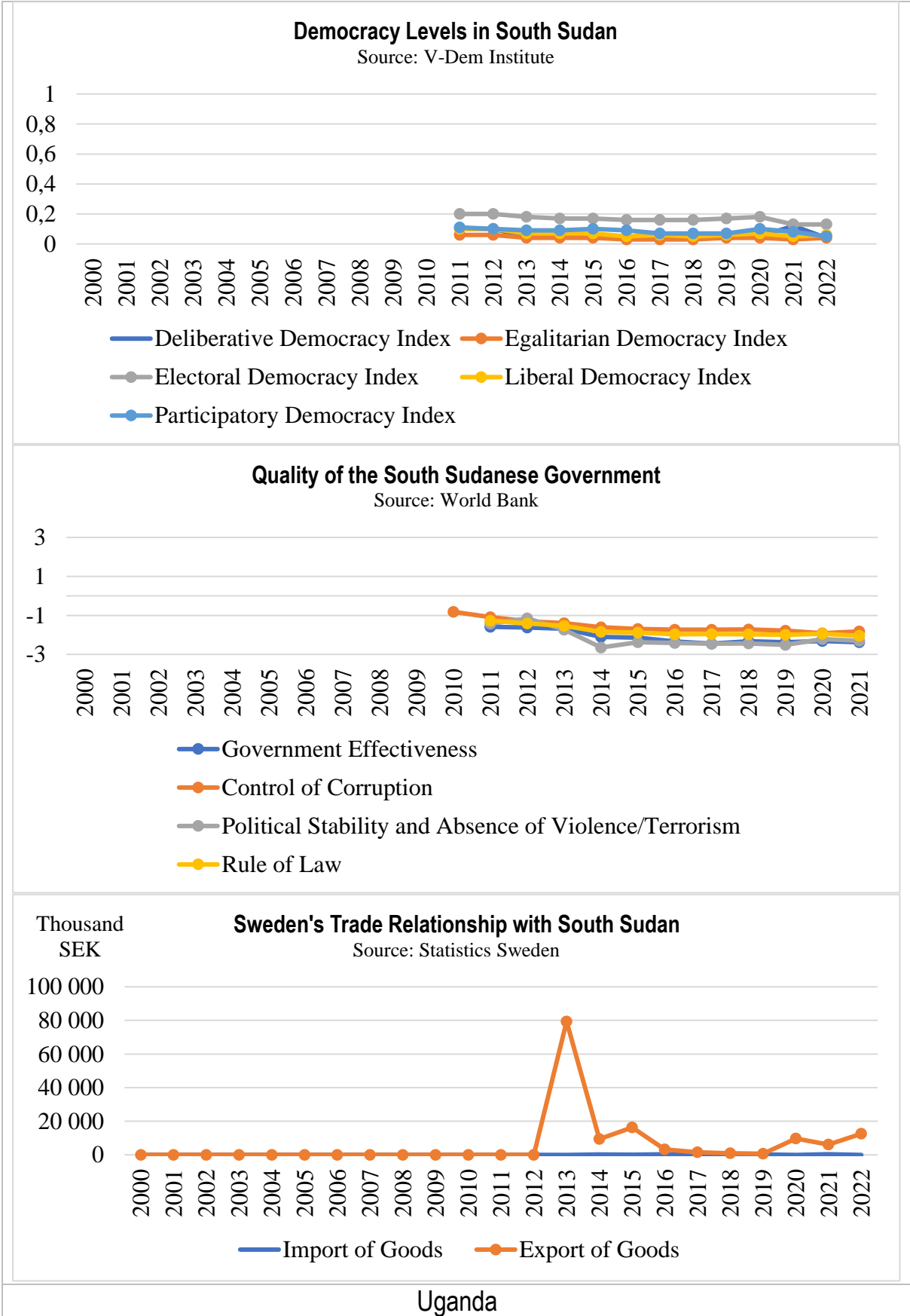
Source: World Bank

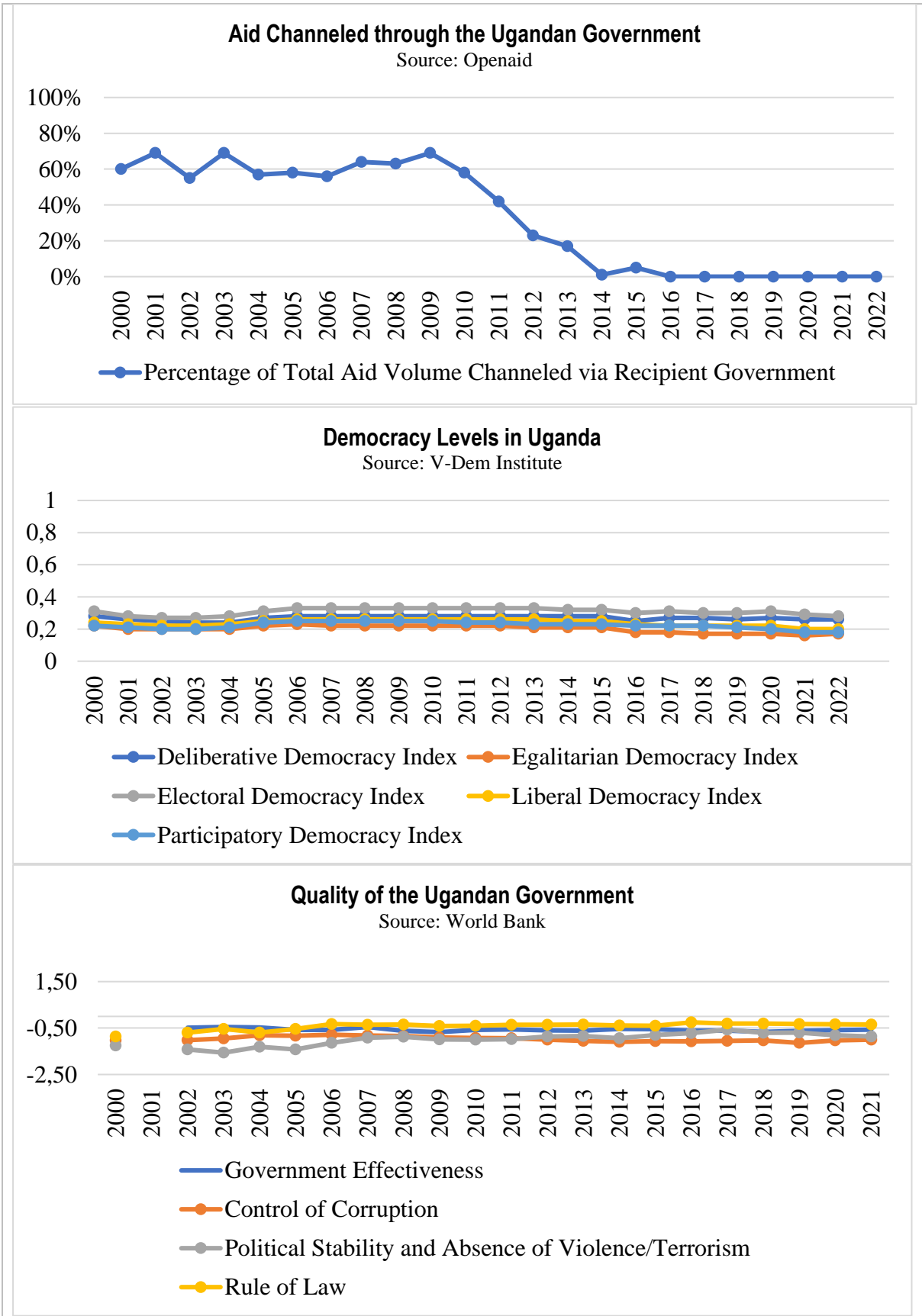


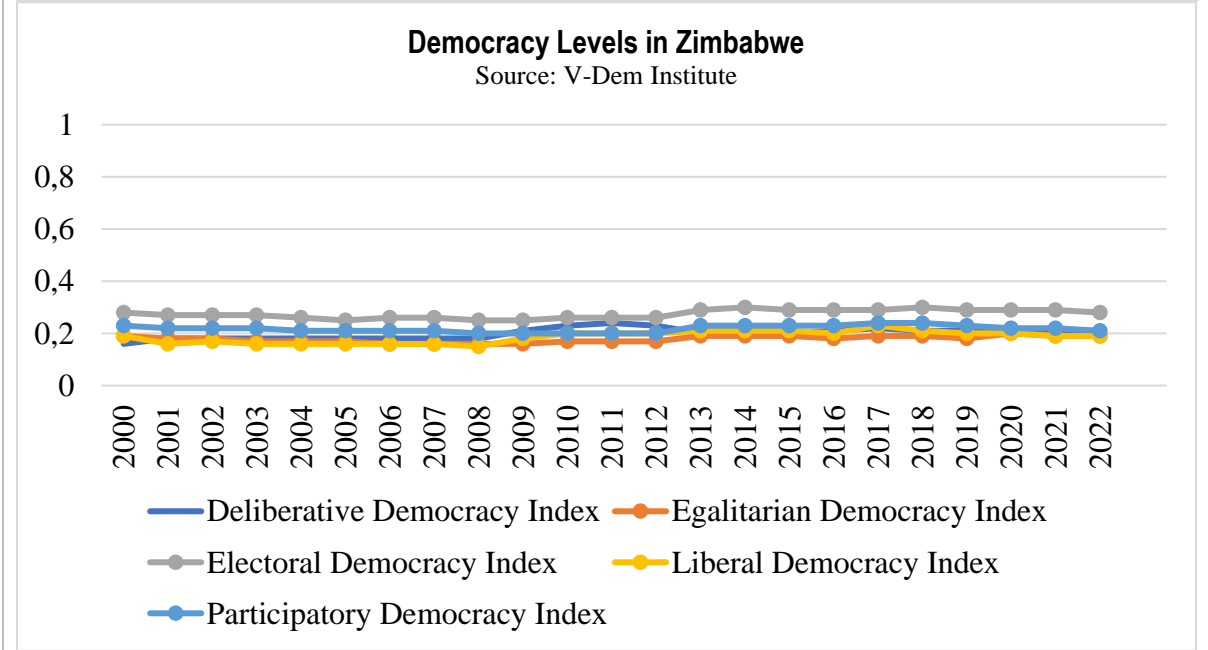
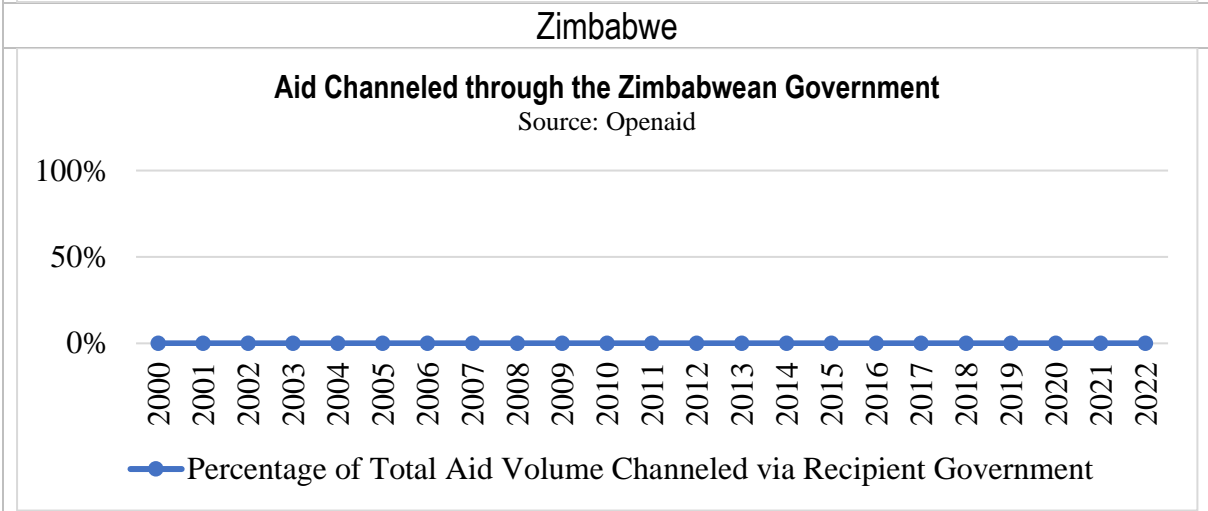
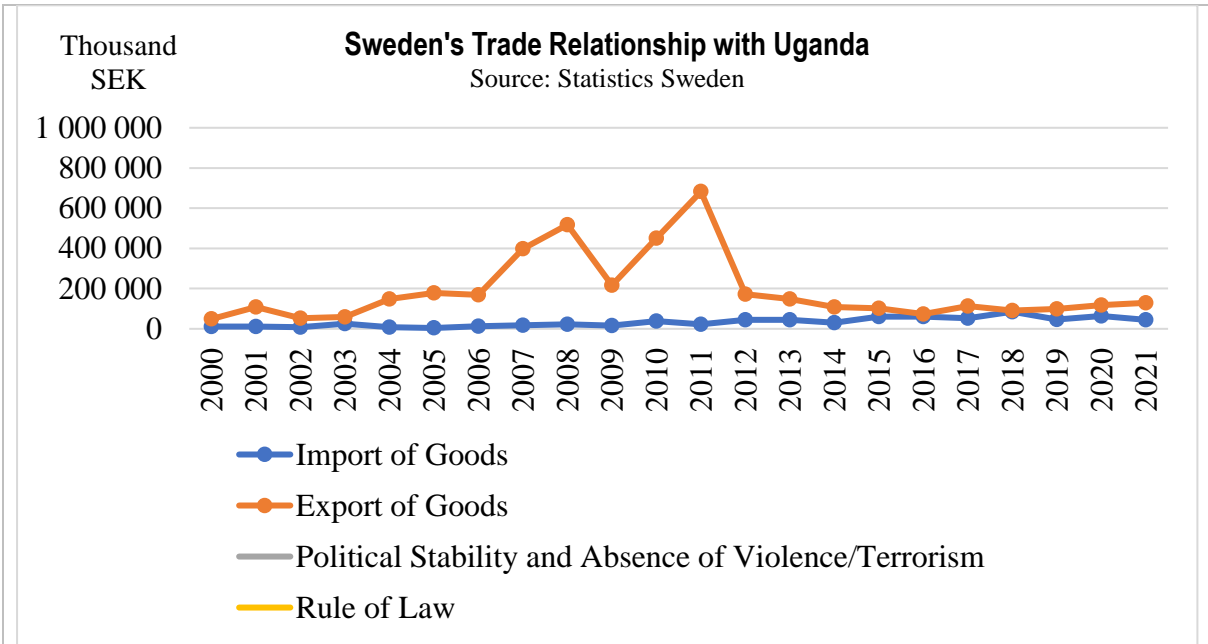






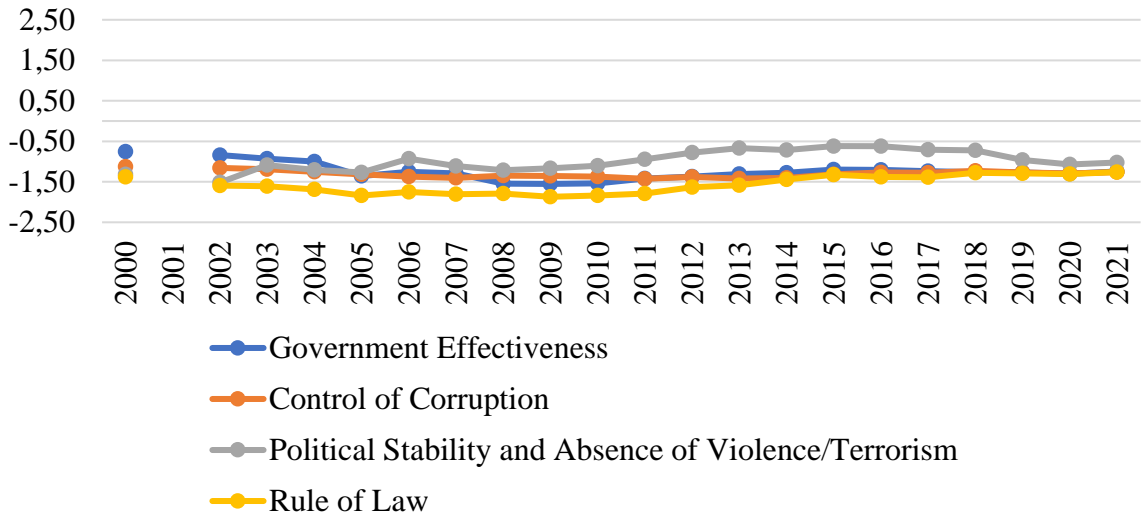






### Quality of the Zimbabwean Government

Source: World Bank



### Sweden's Trade Relationship with Zimbabwe

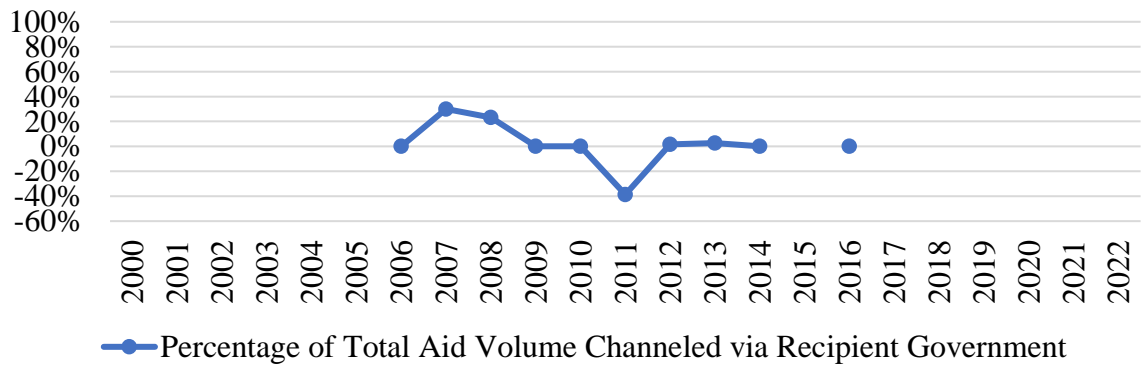
Source: Statistics Sweden



Botswana

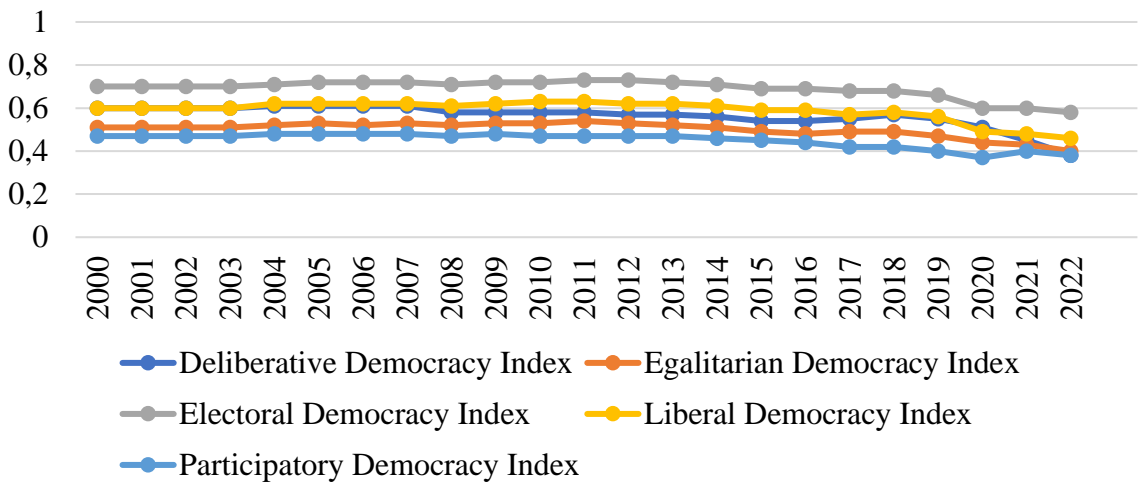
### Aid Channeled through the Botswana Government

Source: Openaid



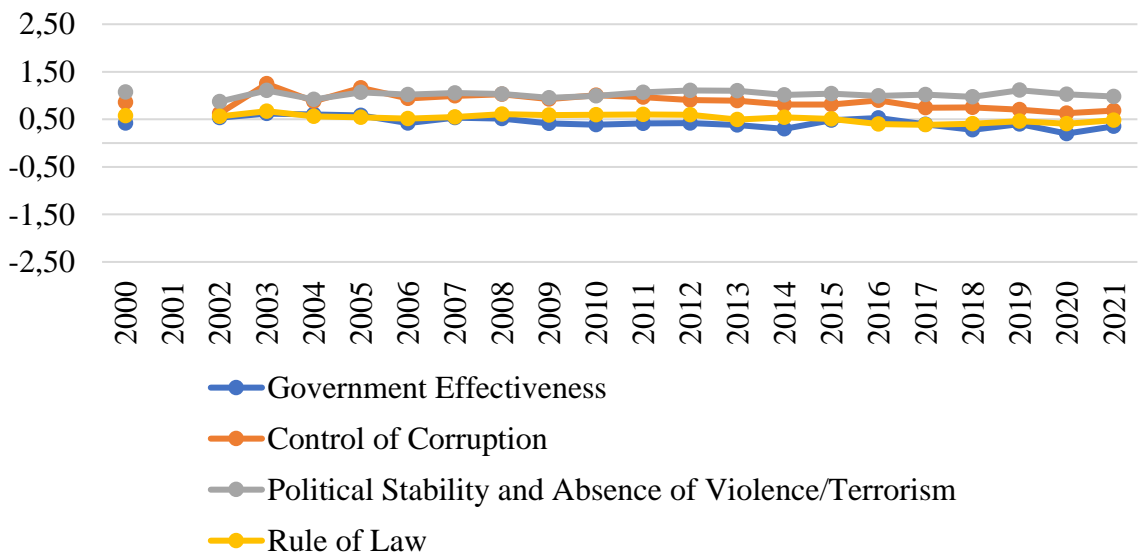
### Democracy Levels in Botswana

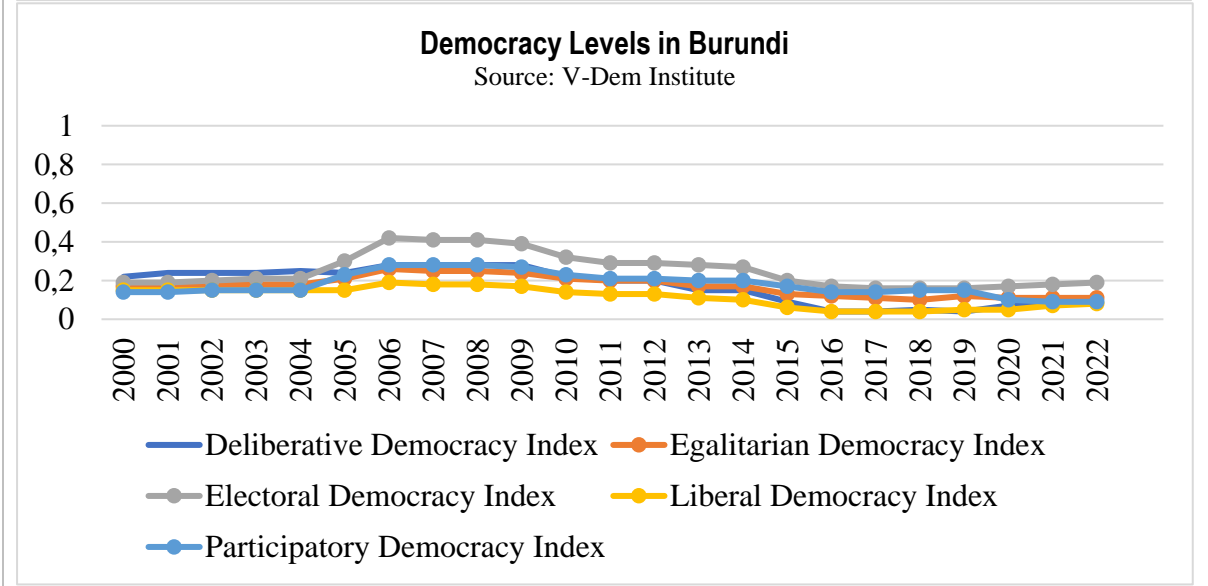
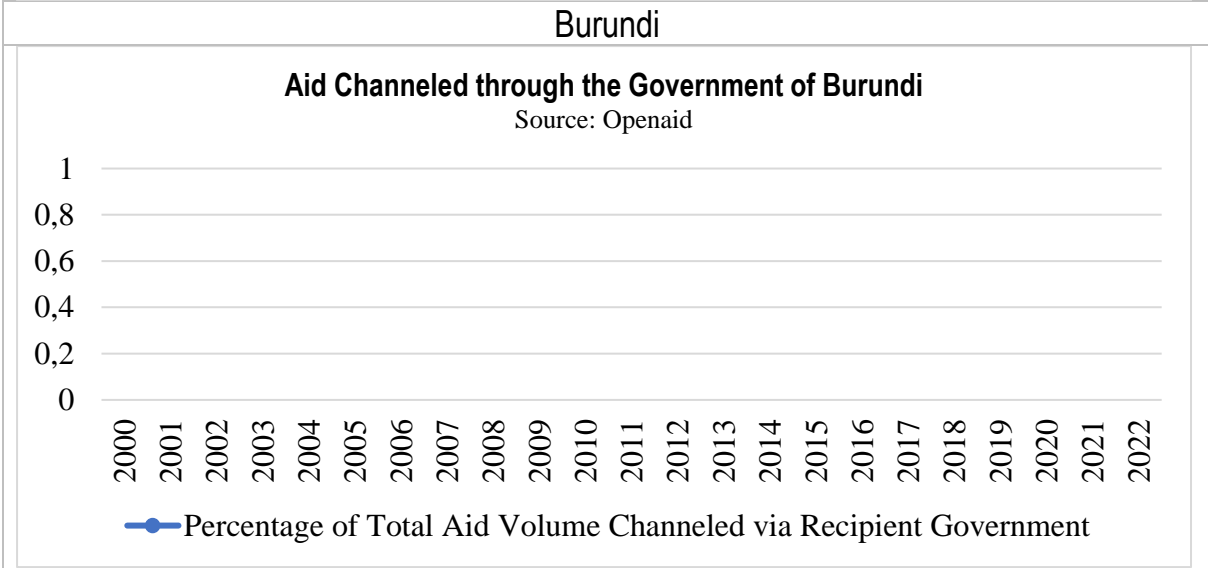
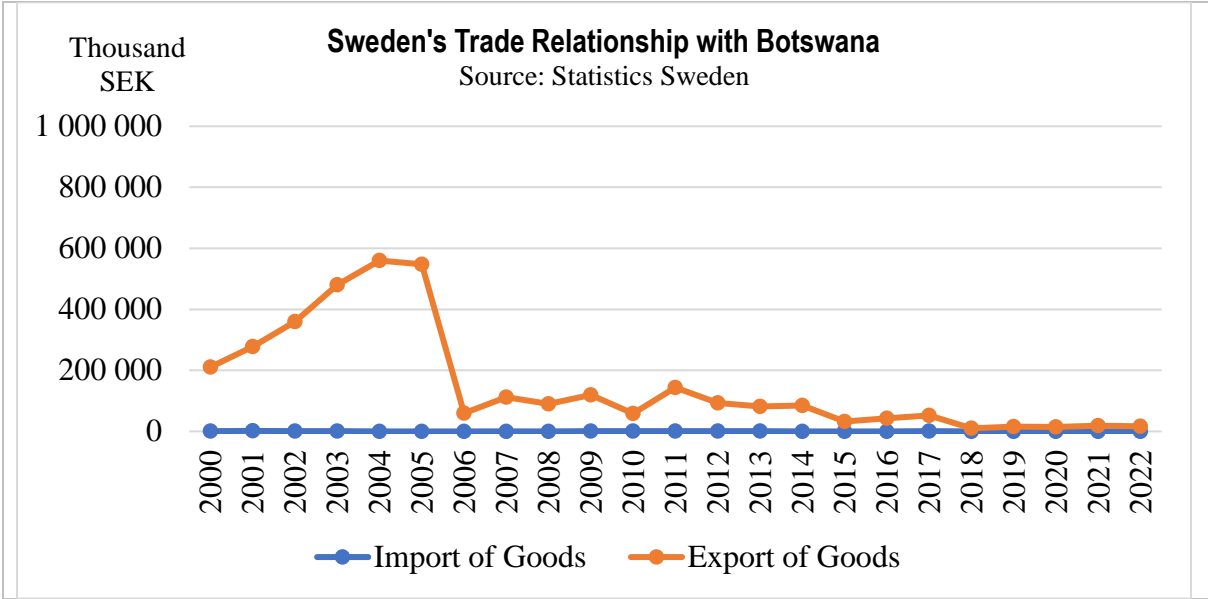
Source: V-Dem Institute

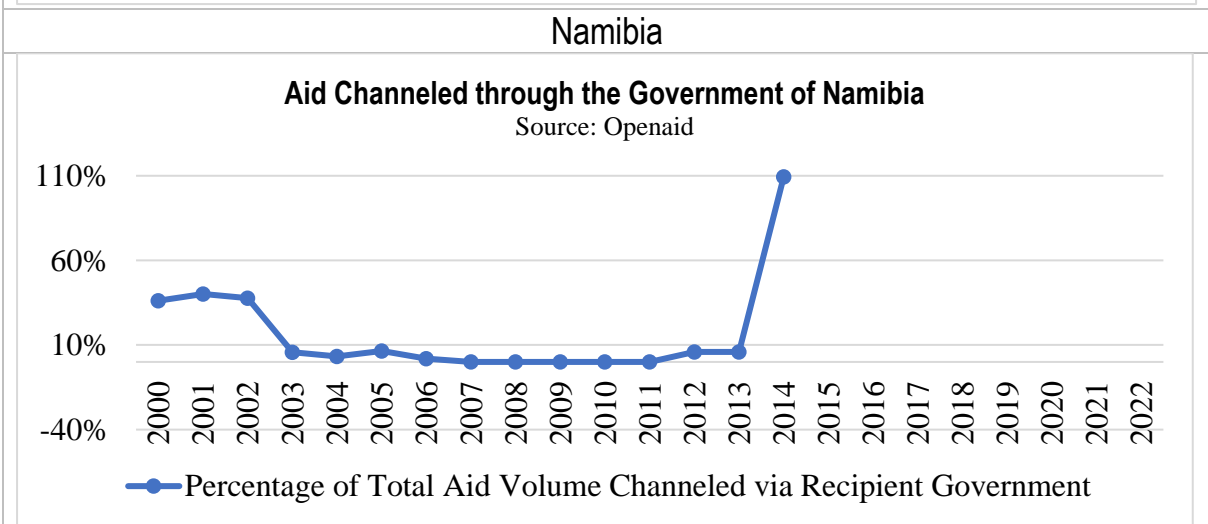
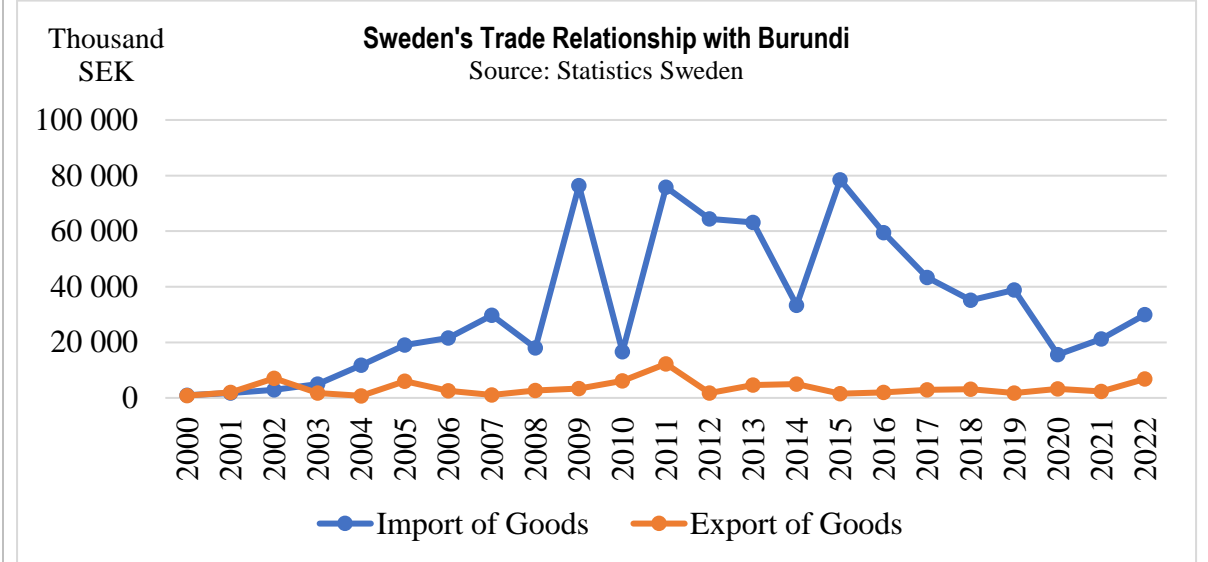
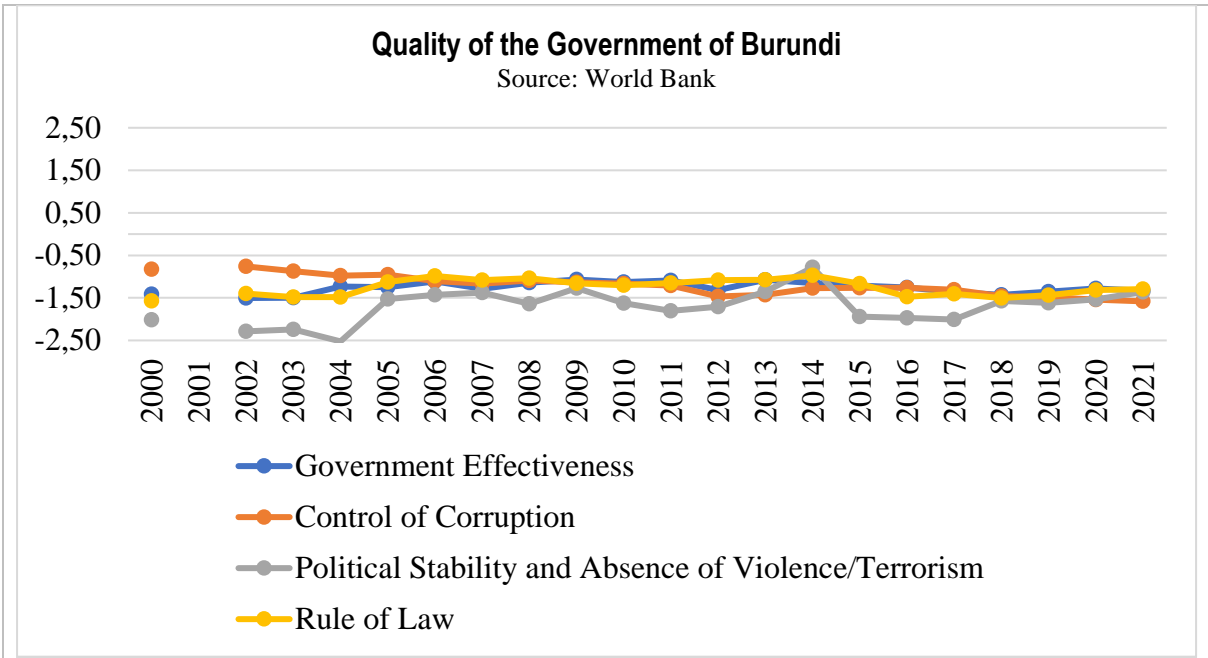


### Quality of the Botswana Government

Source: World Bank

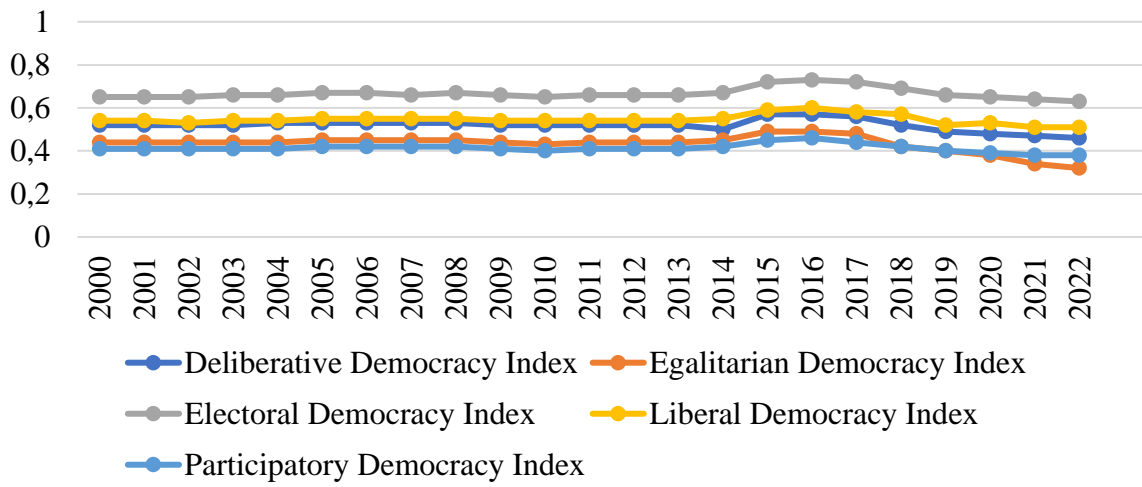






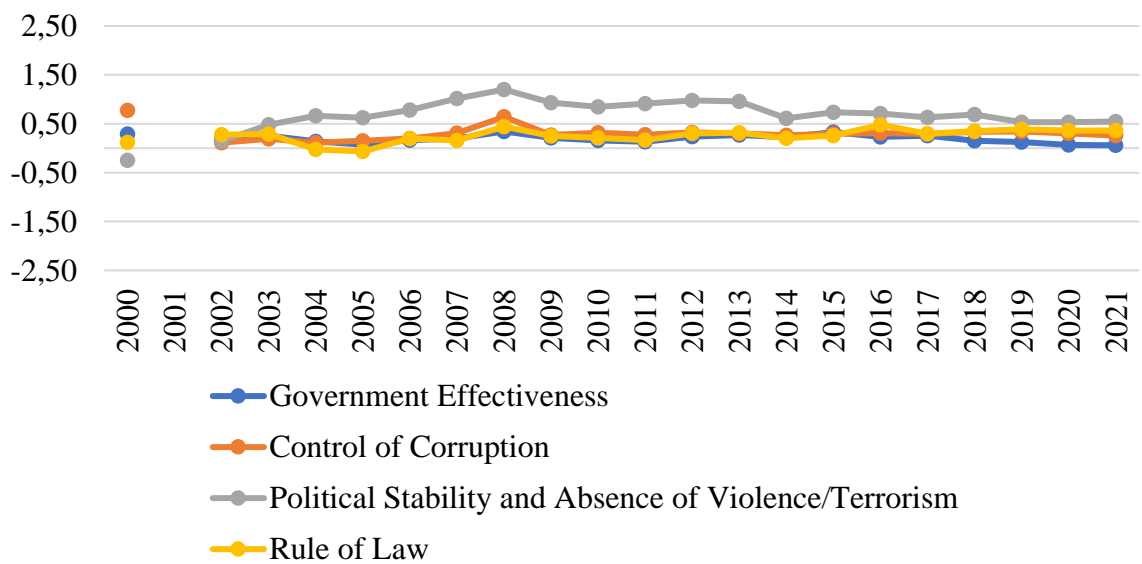
### Democracy Levels in Namibia

Source: V-Dem Institute

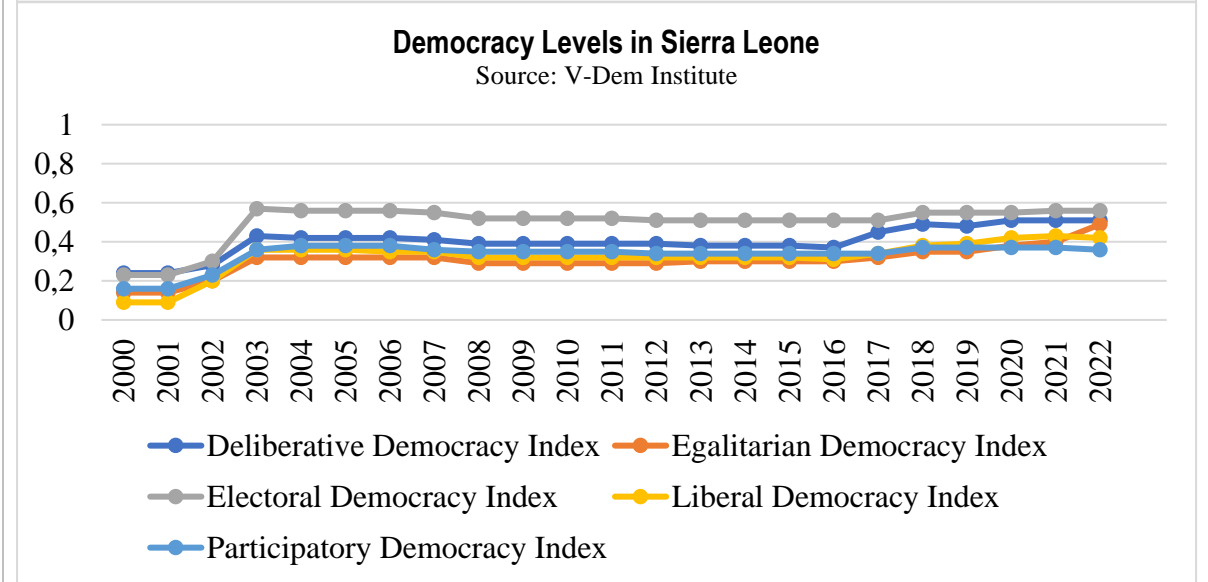
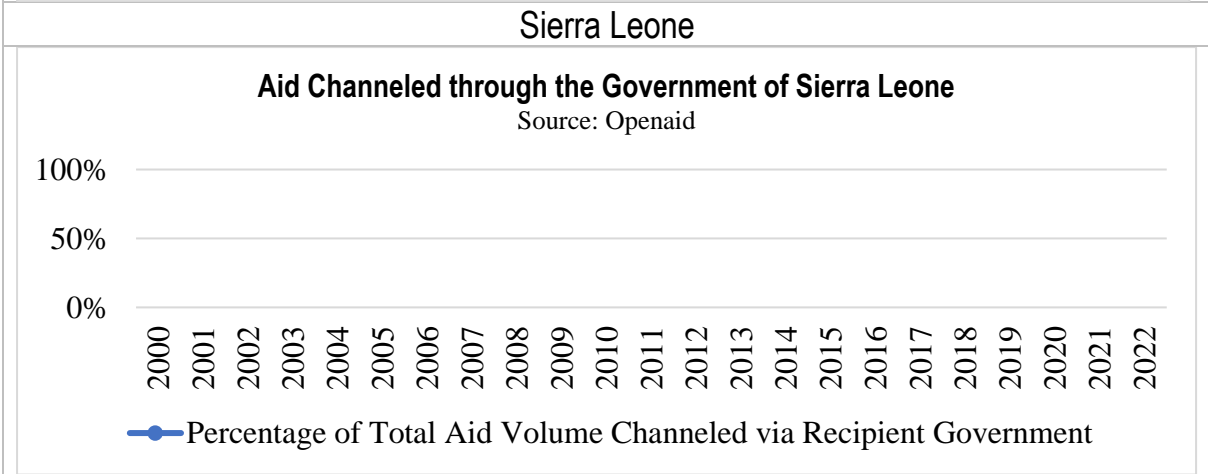
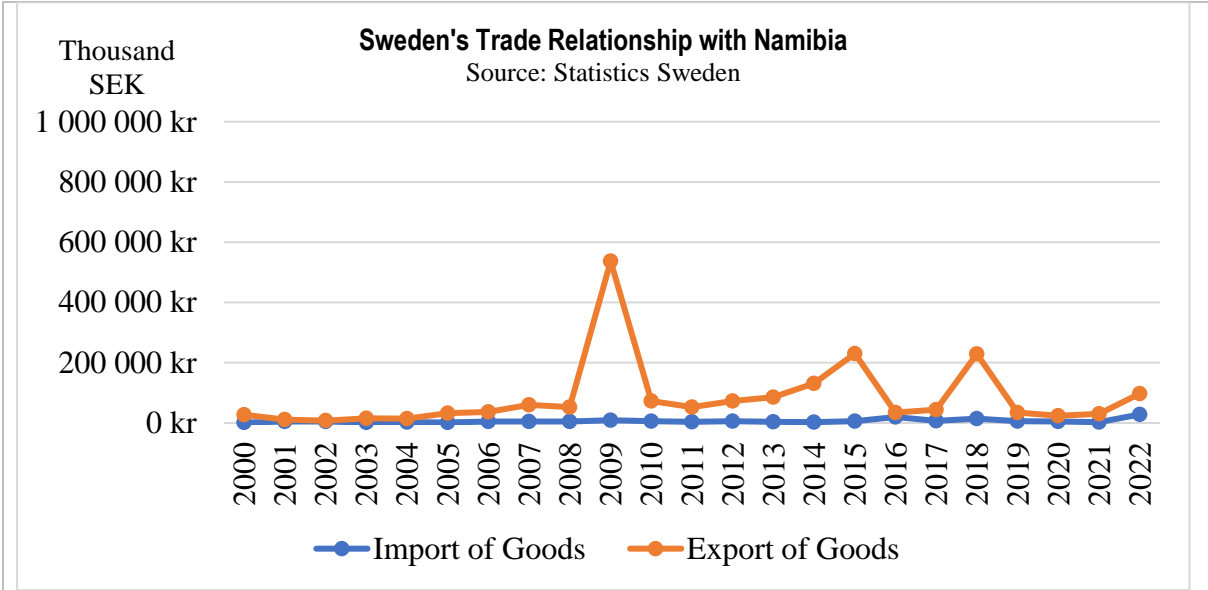


### Quality of the Government of Namibia

Source: World Bank

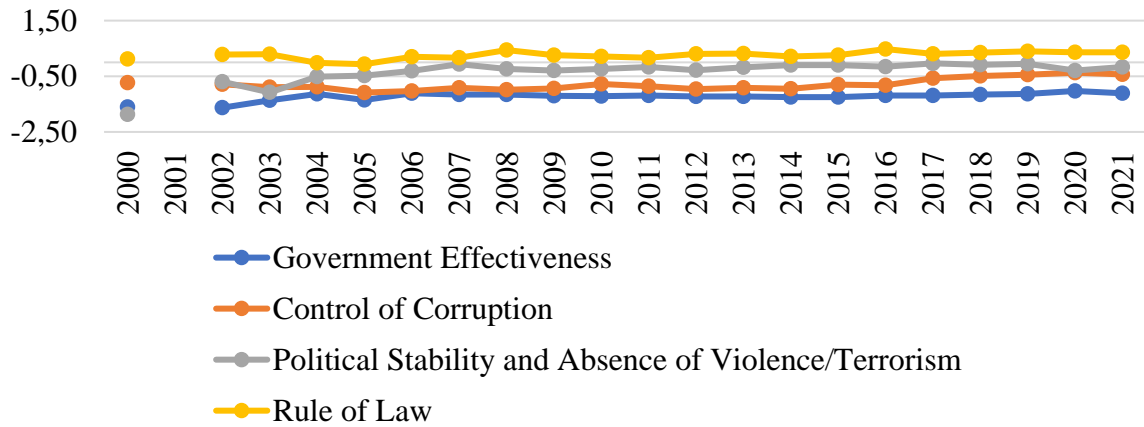






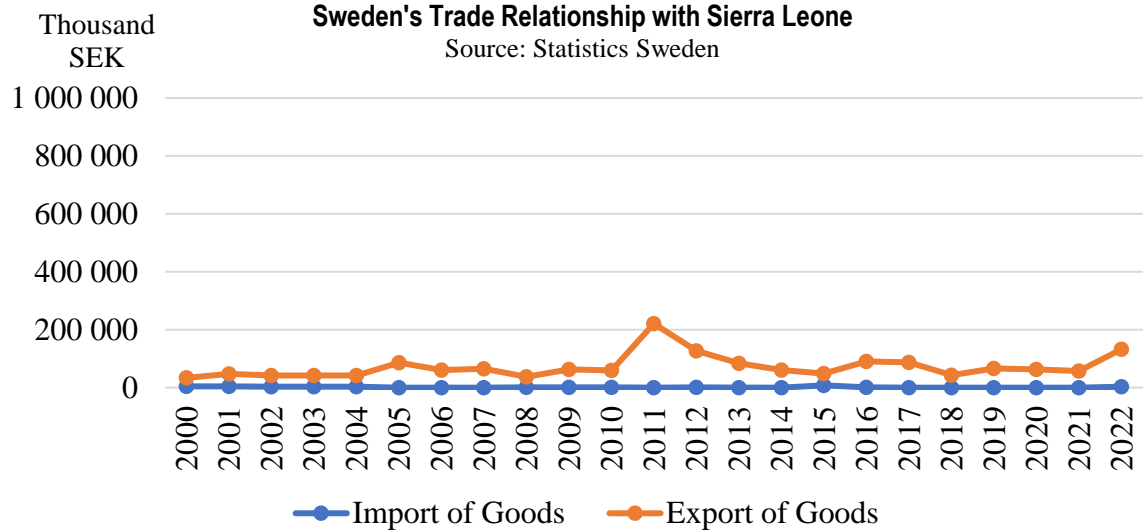
### Quality of the Government of Sierra Leone

Source: World Bank



### Sweden's Trade Relationship with Sierra Leone

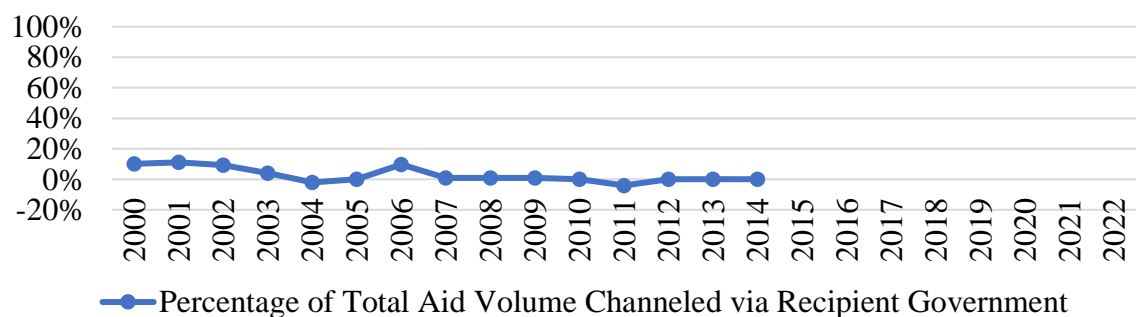
Source: Statistics Sweden



### South Africa

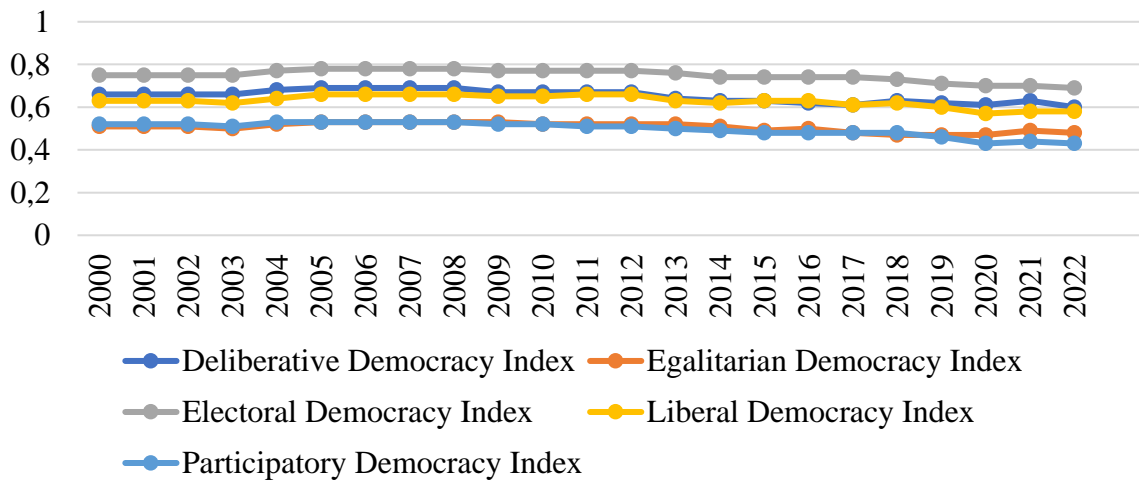
#### Aid Channeled through the South African Government

Source: Openaid



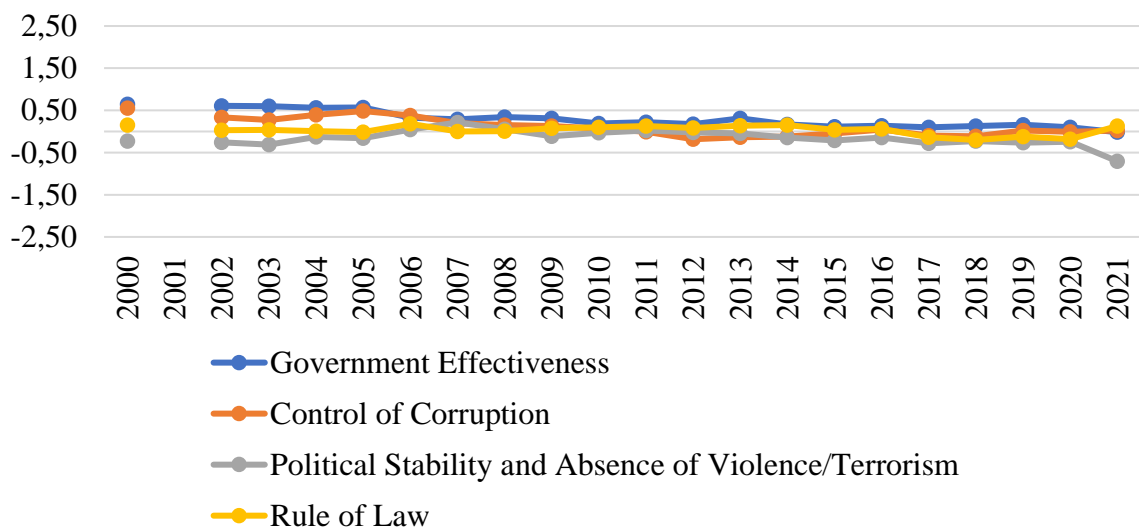
### Democracy Levels in South Africa

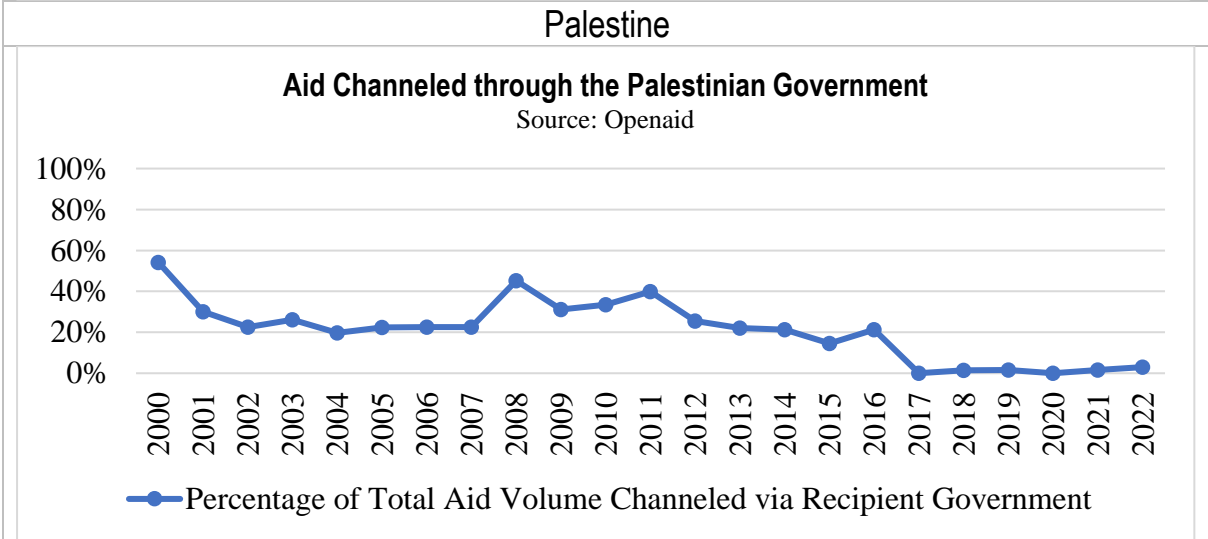
Source: V-Dem Institute



### Quality of the South African Government

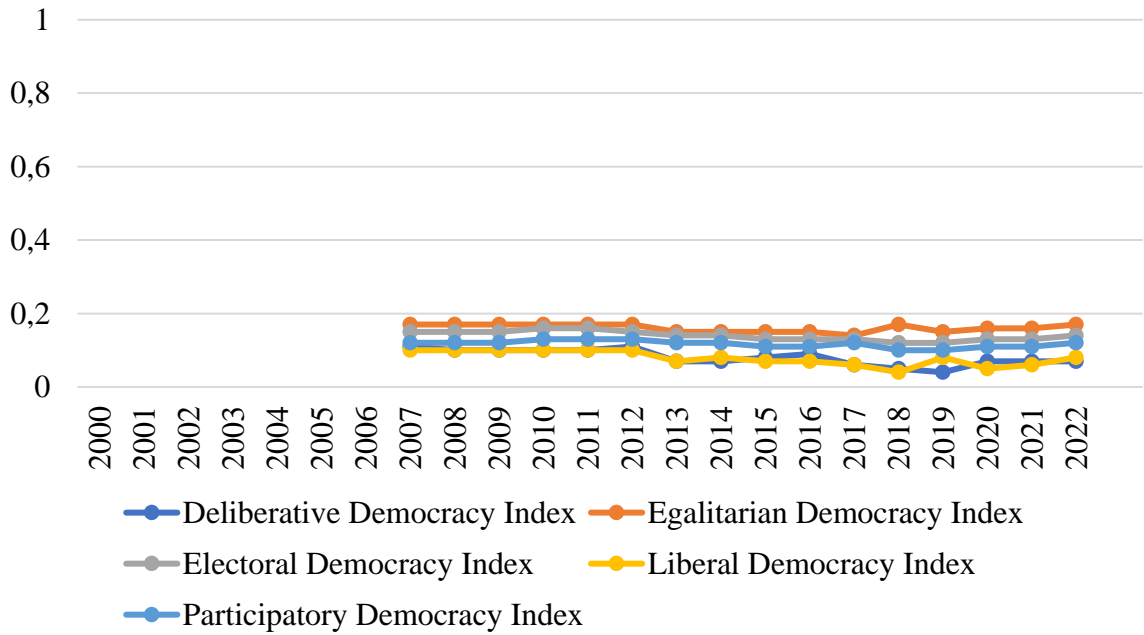
Source: World Bank





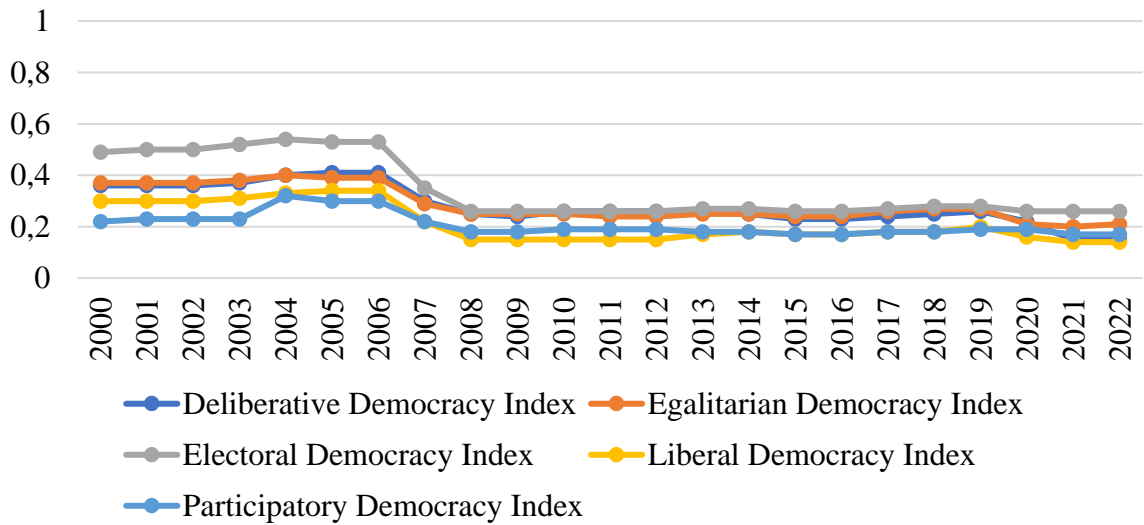
### Democracy Levels in Palestine (Gaza)

Source: V-Dem Institute



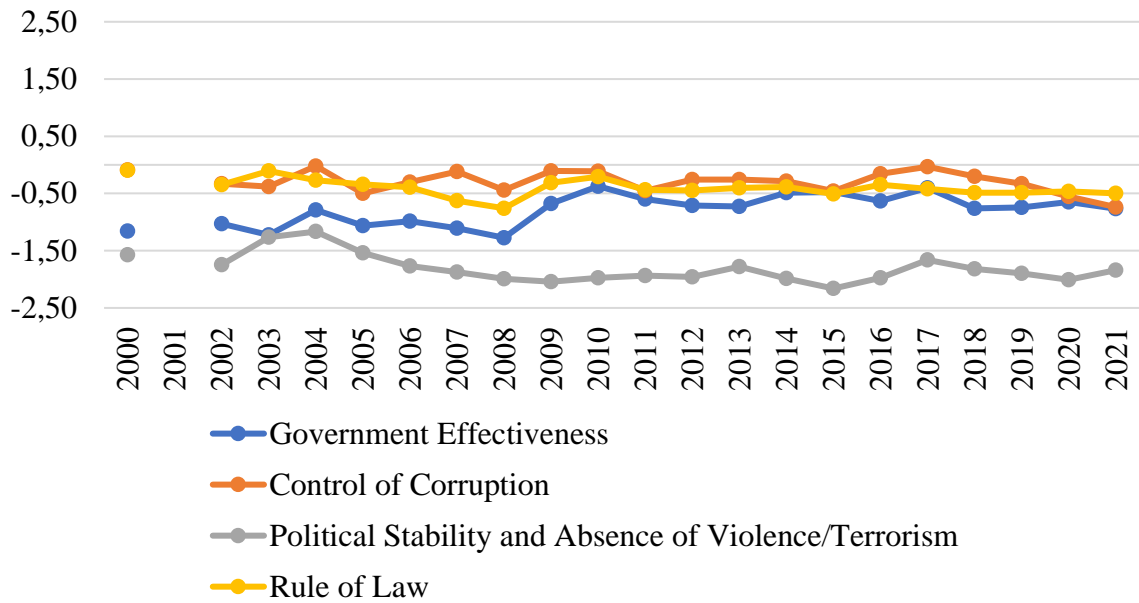
### Democracy Levels in Palestine (West Bank)

Source: V-Dem Institute



### Quality of the Palestinian Government (Gaza & West Bank)

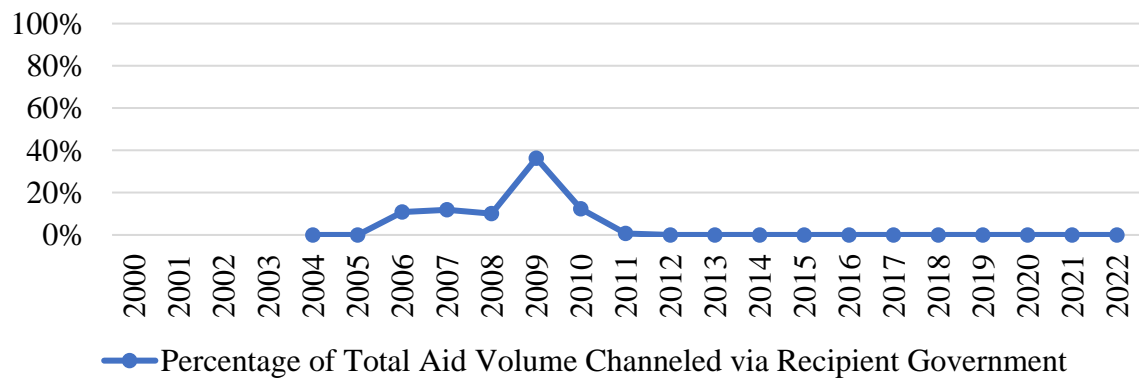
Source: World Bank



### Iraq

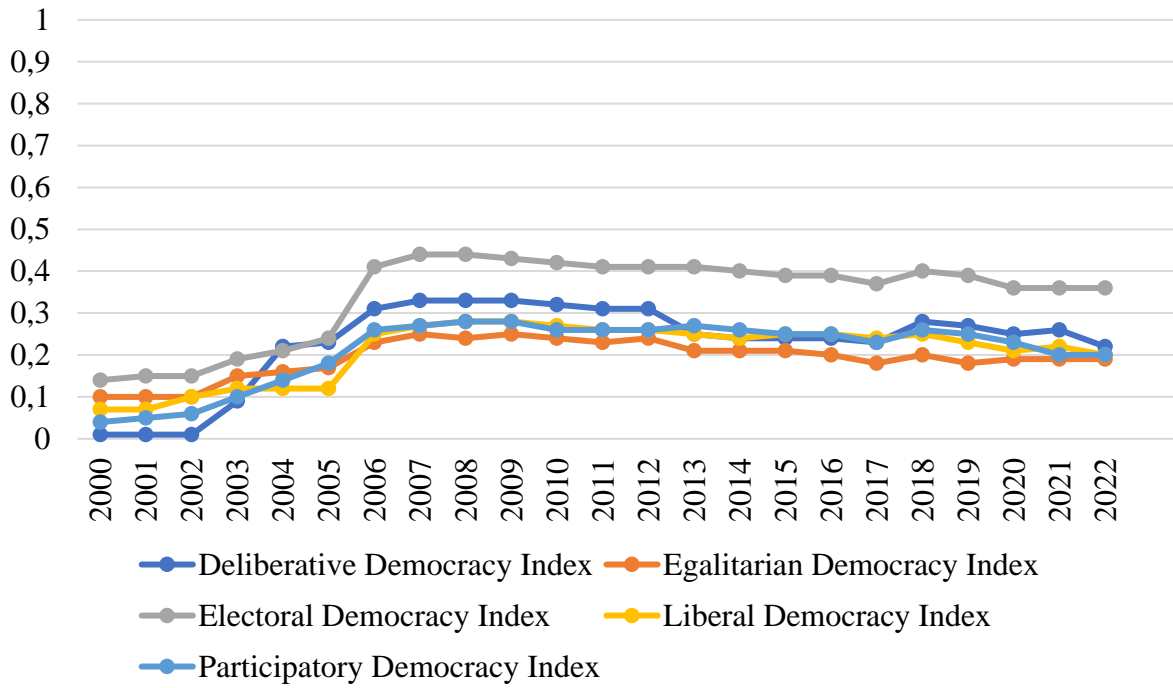
#### Aid Channeled through the Iraqi Government

Source: Openaid



### Democracy Levels in Iraq

Source: V-Dem Institute



### Quality of the Iraqi Government

Source: World Bank

