

Annex A

Other ways of assessing democracy

We have described the principles and purposes of our framework for democracy assessment. Our framework is not the first such attempt at assessing the quality of democracy and freedom in countries around the world. The distinctive features of our approach can most readily be appreciated by comparison with other approaches. These are set out in Table A.1, which identifies five different types of assessment framework. We categorize the five approaches in the following ways – by what issues and themes they investigate, who carries them out and for what purpose, their geographical coverage and their respective methodologies. The table also gives examples of the agencies, countries and bodies that carry them out.

This is not an exhaustive list, and there are obvious overlaps between the types listed. Thus, for example, there is a strong thematic overlap between the first four in the table, all of which predominantly include civil and political rights in their assessment. But this similarity should not obscure crucial differences of purpose between them that feed into their respective methodologies. Thus, the first category, human rights surveys, aim to identify where individual countries stand in a global comparison; the second, governance assessments, uses assessment to select and monitor aid projects in given countries; the third, democracy indices, are concerned to explore empirical relationships between democracy and other significant variables; the fourth, democratic audits, are primarily concerned to raise consciousness and the level of public debate about democracy issues; and the fifth, economic and social assessments, provide a tool for externally funded economic or social investment.

Our approach is set out at the bottom of the table for comparison. Of the five types surveyed, our approach has most in common with the democratic audits, from which it has evolved. That is to say, the primary purpose of our assessment methodology is to help raise public

consciousness about democracy issues in particular countries, to assess the quality of democracy, to identify where it is strong and where it is weak, and to identify reforms.

Since we are sceptical about outsiders sitting in judgement on a country's democracy, often from a position of presumed superiority, we take the view that the right people to conduct such assessments are the citizens of the country involved, a principle which is now increasingly being recognized internationally. Not least, only they know the history and culture of their country – an important base for understanding its approach to and arrangements for democracy. In some instances, it may be appropriate – and in many cases it can add legitimacy to an assessment – if the government is involved (as in the case of Mongolia and the Netherlands: see Part 3). Much will depend on the government's motives and the independence of the assessment. In Zimbabwe, for example, President Robert Mugabe's government established a major survey of the people's democratic aspirations to shoulder aside a popular initiative and to take control of the process. Mugabe then rejected the conclusions of his own official inquiry.

Thus, safeguards will be an essential prerequisite for such assessments. For example, government assessments should allow the assessors, as our methodology demands, to define for themselves which aspects of democracy and which criteria should be chosen for investigation, as well as which benchmarks or standards might be appropriate for use in the assessment.

Other frameworks tend to predetermine these key issues of method, and these issues are often neither explicitly recognized nor discussed. In the International IDEA process, they are exposed to debate and choice, while the flexibility of the framework makes it sensitive to the contextual specificities of individual countries under assessment. To identify such choices, and what is involved in them, is one of the key purposes of this Guide.

We have, however, gone beyond the original idea and practice of a democratic audit in a number of ways, which involve incorporating elements from some of the other types of assessment. Extending the idea of democratic audit to newly established democracies required us to expose the original criteria and methods employed for the UK audits to a process of international assessment and criticism. As a result, the framework now includes sections on economic and social rights and the international dimensions of democracy that were not in the original framework. It also treats more seriously and acutely the proc-

esses of assessment and the choice of standards or comparators to be used. As well as the body of economic and social assessments, we have also drawn on the experience of project-led governance assessments in our methodology.

Furthermore, anyone attempting to construct lists of possible sources for relevant data, whether international, regional or country-specific, is bound to be indebted to the sources and findings developed by the profession of political science and by international NGOs. In these different ways we attempt to draw on the best of existing assessment work, while also maintaining our distinctive approach.

Table A.1. Comparing assessment frameworks

Type of assessment	Who carries it out?	What it covers	Purpose	Geographical coverage	Methodology	Selected examples
1. Human rights surveys	International NGOs and governments	Civil and political rights; economic social and cultural rights	Identify where countries stand in a global comparison	Global	Quantitative or qualitative comparison between countries	Freedom House ¹ Humana Index ² Human Rights Watch ³ Amnesty International ⁴ US State Dept. ⁵ CIRI Human Rights Data Project ⁶
2. Governance assessments	Government aid agencies	Electoral democracy, accountable government, the rule of law	Means to select and monitor aid projects	New democracies	Country-specific assessments against agency-derived indicators	CIDA ⁷ DFID ⁸ USAID ⁹ EU ¹⁰ Millennium Challenge Account ¹¹ APRM ¹²
3. Democracy indices	Social and political scientists	Civil and political rights, electoral democracy	Explore empirical relationships between democracy and other variables (e.g. economic development and conflict)	Some global, some new democracies	Aggregate quantitative indicators (dichotomous or polychotomous)	Lipset ¹³ Diamond ¹⁴ Hadenius ¹⁵ M Moore ¹⁶ Kaufman et al. ¹⁷ Przeworski et al. ¹⁸ Polity IV ¹⁹ Bertelsmann Transformation Index ²⁰ EUI ²¹
4. Democratic audits	Joint civil society initiatives	Civil and political rights, electoral democracy, accountable government	Raising consciousness about democracy and its condition	Old democracies	Country-specific qualitative assessment by citizens	Canada ²² Sweden ²³ UK ²⁴ Australia ²⁵ Denmark ²⁶ Netherlands ²⁷ EU ²⁸
5. Economic and social assessments	International agencies and governments	Economic and social indicators	Guide to externally funded economic and social investment	Global	Quantitative indicators to assess comparative performance	UNDP ²⁹ World Bank ³⁰ Social Watch ³¹
International IDEA democracy assessment	National and international civil society, and governments	Full range of political and social democracy	Enhance public debate; identify and evaluate reform priorities	Global	Country-specific qualitative assessments by in-country experts	Transparency International ³² International IDEA-sponsored

References for Table A.1

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Annex B

The democracy assessment questionnaire

Example

You are invited to tick one of the boxes in answer to each question in the accompanying list. The classifications are:

- VH = very high;**
- H = high;**
- M = middling or ambiguous;**
- L = low;**
- VL = very low.**

As an example, under question 2.1, if you consider that there are serious abrogations of the rule of law, for example, the existence of areas or groups above or beyond the reach of the law, or outside its protection in your country, then you might tick 'L' or 'low' for your assessment of the degree to which the rule of law is operative.

The numbering of the boxes corresponds to the relevant questions on the lists. For each section you are then asked to specify what you consider a) the best feature, and b) the most serious problem in your country from a democratic point of view; then c) to suggest what you think might be done to improve this problem.

2.0 The rule of law and access to justice

Are state and society consistently subject to the law?

2.1 How far is the rule of law operative throughout the territory?

- 2.2 To what extent are all public officials subject to the rule of law and to transparent rules in the performance of their functions?
- 2.3 How independent are the courts and the judiciary from the executive, and how free are they from all kinds of interference?
- 2.4 How equal and secure is the access of citizens to justice, to due process and to redress in the event of maladministration?
- 2.5 How far do the criminal justice and penal systems observe due rules of impartial and equitable treatment in their operations?
- 2.6 How much confidence do people have in the legal system to deliver fair and effective justice?

	VH	H	M	L	VL
2.1					
2.2					
2.3					
2.4					
2.5					
2.6					

Best feature

Most serious problem

Suggested improvement

Annex C

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Annex D

About the authors

David Beetham has written extensively on democracy and human rights, including economic to and social rights. He is associate director of and a major contributor and author for the UK-based Democratic Audit, and was one of the authors of the *Handbook of Democracy Assessment* developed by International IDEA (Kluwer Law International, 2002). He is the author of numerous other publications, including *The Legitimation of Power* (Humanities Press International, 1991); *Introducing Democracy: 80 Questions and Answers* (Polity Press, Blackwell and UNESCO, 1995); *Democracy and Human Rights* (Polity Press and Blackwell, 1999); *Democracy: A Beginner's Guide* (Oneworld, c. 2005); *Defining and Measuring Democracy* (Sage, 1994); and *Parliament and Democracy in the Twenty-first Century: A Guide to Good Practice* (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2006). He holds the position of professor emeritus at the University of Leeds.

Edzia Carvalho is a PhD candidate in the Department of Government at the University of Essex. She worked as research assistant on the State of Democracy in South Asia Project carried out by the Lokniti Project at the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies in Delhi. She has an MA in the theory and practice of human rights (University of Essex, 2006), and an MA in politics and international relations (University of Mumbai, 2003). She is the author of 'Measuring Children's Rights: An Alternative Approach', *International Journal of Children's Rights* (forthcoming, winter 2008).

Todd Landman is a Reader in the Department of Government and director of the Centre for Democratic Governance at the University of Essex. He was deputy director of the Human Rights Centre at the University of Essex from 1999 to 2003, and co-director from 2003 to 2005. He is vice-chair of Democratic Audit's Board of Trustees, has worked on numerous projects for International IDEA, and has assisted the Mongolian Government in carrying out a democracy

assessment. He is the author of numerous publications, including *Issues and Methods in Comparative Politics* (Routledge, 2000, 2003, 2008); *Studying Human Rights* (Routledge, 2006); *Protecting Human Rights: A Comparative Study* (Georgetown University Press, 2005); (with Joe Foweraker et al.) *Governing Latin America* (Polity Press, 2003); and (with Joe Foweraker) *Citizenship Rights and Social Movements: A Comparative and Statistical Analysis* (Oxford University Press, 1997). He has been a consultant for the UK Department for international Development (DFID), the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), the Danish International Development Agency (Danida), the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), the UNDP, the European Commission, Minority Rights Group and Amnesty International.

Stuart Weir is the Director of Democratic Audit and a visiting professor in the Department of Government at the University of Essex. He is the author and editor of *Unequal Britain: Human Rights as a Route to Social Justice* (Politico's, 2006) and joint author of reports on the UK Government's counter-terrorism laws and strategy, the politics of the British National Party, and power and participation in the UK. He is joint author of three democratic audits on the UK, and one of the authors of the International IDEA 2002 *Handbook of Democracy Assessment*. He was also founder of Charter 88, the UK campaign for democratic change, a former editor of the *New Statesman* and *New Socialist*, and former deputy editor of *New Society*. He has worked for both the Child Poverty Action Group and Shelter. He writes and broadcasts widely on democracy issues; has worked in television on the UK Channel 4 People's Parliament series and drama-documentaries; and acts as a consultant to select committees in the UK Parliament and internationally for the EU, the UNDP, the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the UK DFID.

Annex E

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Annex F

About International IDEA

What is International IDEA?

The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA) is an intergovernmental organization that supports sustainable democracy worldwide. Its objective is to strengthen democratic institutions and processes. International IDEA acts as a catalyst for democracy building by providing knowledge resources, expertise and a platform for debate on democracy issues. It works together with policy makers, donor governments, UN organizations and agencies, regional organizations and others engaged in the field of democracy building.

What does International IDEA do?

Democracy building is complex and touches on many areas including constitutions, electoral systems, political parties, legislative arrangements, the judiciary, central and local government, and formal and traditional government structures. International IDEA is engaged with all of these issues and offers to those in the process of democratization:

- ▶ knowledge resources, in the form of handbooks, databases, websites and expert networks;
- ▶ policy proposals to provoke debate and action on democracy issues; and
- ▶ assistance to democratic reforms in response to specific national requests.

Areas of work

International IDEA's notable areas of expertise are:

- ▶ *Constitution-building processes.* A constitutional process can lay the foundations for peace and development, or plant seeds of conflict.

International IDEA is able to provide knowledge and make policy proposals for constitution building that is genuinely nationally owned, is sensitive to gender and conflict-prevention dimensions, and responds effectively to national priorities.

- ▶ *Electoral processes.* The design and management of elections has a strong impact on the wider political system. International IDEA seeks to ensure the professional management and independence of elections, adapt electoral systems, and build public confidence in the electoral process.
- ▶ *Political parties.* Political parties form the essential link between voters and the government, yet polls taken across the world show that political parties enjoy a low level of confidence. International IDEA analyses the functioning of political parties, the public funding of political parties, their management and their relations with the public.
- ▶ *Democracy and gender.* International IDEA recognizes that if democracies are to be truly democratic, then women—who make up over half of the world’s population—must be represented on equal terms with men. International IDEA develops comparative resources and tools designed to advance the participation and representation of women in political life.
- ▶ *Democracy assessments.* Democratization is a national process. International IDEA’s State of Democracy methodology allows people to assess their own democracy instead of relying on externally produced indicators or rankings of democracies.

Where does International IDEA work?

International IDEA works worldwide. It is based in Stockholm, Sweden, and has offices in Latin America, Africa and Asia.