

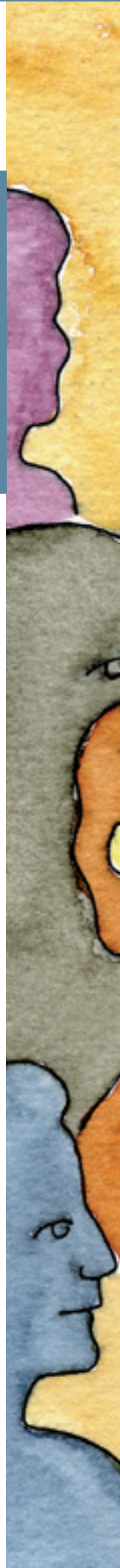


Prospects for Democratic Development in South Asia and the European Union's Role in Democracy Building

Dr Ananya Mukherjee Reed, Associate Professor, Political Science and Development Studies, York University, Toronto, Canada

and

Professor Kant K. Bhargava, Former Secretary General, SAARC and Fellow, Centre for the Study of Democracy, Queens University, Kingston, Canada



Prospects for Democratic Development in South Asia and the European Union's Role in Democracy Building

© International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance 2009

International IDEA publications are independent of specific national or political interests. Views expressed in this publication do not necessarily represent the views of International IDEA, its Board or its Council members.

Applications for permission to reproduce or translate all or any part of this publication should be made to:

International IDEA
SE -103 34 Stockholm
Sweden

Layout by: Bulls Graphics

Prospects for Democratic Development in South Asia and the European Union's Role in Democracy Building

Abstract

This paper provides a brief conceptual analysis of democracy in development. In particular, it explores the concept of *developmental democracy* as it is outlined in various EU documents. The paper provides a brief analysis of the main challenges to democracy building in South Asia. It explores whether, in the backdrop to these challenges, a developmental approach to democracy building might have some resonance. The final section examines the policy tools that could be used for democracy building in South Asia. It considers the applicability of EU experience to South Asia and possible EU approaches at the regional and national levels. The paper focuses on EU strategies for each country, with a focus on the bilateral and the local levels.

Summary of Recommendations

The EU should explore a developmental approach to democracy that goes beyond formal democracy and governance in the narrow sense, taking a deeper, more comprehensive view that sees democracy as the emergence of more equitable power relations between states and citizens, as well as between groups of citizens. In concrete strategic terms, this implies building alliances with local social actors who are engaged in projects of democracy and development – specifically those that seek long-term change – rather than discrete, short-term goals. Ideally, these alliances should be built in ways that connect the local, national, regional and international levels. Important lessons can be derived from the success of the EU in integrating states with disparate levels of democracy and development. A critical lesson here concerns the relative equality *within* the EU nation-states, brought about through universal access to education, health and social security accompanied by appropriate redistributive policies. The EU country strategy papers for the SAARC member states are a useful starting point for delineating such a developmental approach to democracy building. This paper offers some reflections on these strategies.. In addition, the paper recommends that the

A preliminary review suggests that many discrete EU strategic initiatives would gain much from being embedded in, and linked organically to, a conceptual framework for democracy building. In the South Asian context, it is also necessary for such a framework to systematically connect democracy building with an appropriate notion of development.

EU should more actively pursue alternative paradigms of governance and management of economic enterprise. Such models, if planned appropriately, could contribute significantly to the substantive democratization of power relations at every level.

1. A Brief Conceptual Discussion

The European Union's policies for advancing democracy would gain considerably from greater conceptual coherence and this is also the case for such EU policies in South Asia. A preliminary review suggests that many of the EU's discrete strategic initiatives would gain much from being embedded in, and linked organically to, a conceptual framework for democracy building. In the South Asian context, it is also necessary for such a framework to systematically connect democracy building with an appropriate notion of development.

Without going into an extensive theoretical discussion of democracy, this section briefly outlines the concepts relevant to the discussion below. The most common and minimal understanding of democracy is that of formal democracy characterized by regular elections, a competitive system of political parties, and a system of separation and checks and balances between the different components of government.¹ It is now widely accepted that unless embedded in strong and institutionalized commitments to human rights and governance, formal democracy is unable to deliver actual benefits to citizens. As the evidence from many democratic transitions illustrates, such transitions do not necessarily deliver 'development' or social progress. Under these circumstances, the need for new concepts which connect more systematically the notions of democracy

and development has arisen. In this context, it is increasingly acknowledged that both democracy and development are ultimately connected to the issue of power, that is, power relationships between citizens and those between states and citizens. There is a large body of theoretical work on power, but discourses on development, and in particular development strategy, have, more often than not, refrained from a full engagement with the issue.

In the 1990s, in the wake of the structural adjustment policies pursued, most notably, by the International Monetary Fund,

it was felt that a more pragmatic approach to development was necessary which would not aim too high but instead seek to restore mechanisms to guarantee minimal conditions of income, health and education. The Human Development approaches developed by Amartya Sen and Mahbub ul Haq were responses to this crisis and were adopted by all major development institutions (UNDP 1990). The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are a further development along these lines, and are perhaps even more pragmatic in their orientation.

It is perhaps time to revisit two basic premises of the MDG approach: the discreteness of the goals and the prospects for achieving them without addressing deeper structural and institutional issues. Some movement in this direction is already apparent. The United

It is now widely accepted that unless embedded in strong and institutionalized commitments to human rights and governance, formal democracy is unable to deliver actual benefits to citizens. As the evidence from many democratic transitions illustrates, such transitions do not necessarily deliver development or social progress.

¹ It is commonplace to draw a distinction between procedural, liberal and social democracy. There is much debate in the South, particularly in South Asia, about the applicability of these concepts to the developing world (Centre for the Study of Developing Societies 2007).

Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID) has developed this idea in its discussion of governance (UK DFID 2006). The DFID paper puts forward a broader understanding of governance as 'more than government systems and capacities' and emphasizes long-term institution-building in a manner that allows more equitable power relations between states and citizens and between different groups of citizens. The European approach to democracy articulated at the Wilton Park conference in 2007 draws on this broad concept of governance and endorses its emphasis on equitable power relations as a critical goal of democracy building by the EU. The Swedish approach outlines two further perspectives: the perspective of rights and the perspective of the poor.

This means, first, that all decisions and measures must be taken with respect for universally accepted human rights and democratic principles, including equality between women and men, girls and boys – and, second, that the interests and priorities of poor individuals themselves should be the point of departure for these decisions and measures. The political dimension of international development cooperation should be guided by this notion, which doubles as a moral obligation. Sweden's approach to democracy building is in this sense more principled than ideological (Wilton Park 2007:4).

The Wilton Park conference also proposed that these perspectives be explored and drawn on to articulate a notion of developmental democracy. The main premises of such an approach are:

- Explicit recognition of the political dimension of development;
- Emphasis on accountability, representativeness and legitimacy;
- The need to go beyond a narrowly conceived concept of good governance;
- The importance of local and organic democracy development, with an emphasis on democracy building rather than democracy promotion;
- The need to visualize democracy building as a process rather than an outcome

What does this approach mean in practice? Does it mean democracy is simply added to the MDGs? Or does it mean that development remains the main focus and democracy is expected to emerge once developmental deficits have been reduced or eradicated? Historical experience in the region would advise against both. Instead, a developmental approach to democracy should mean a gradual process of democratization of power relations at all levels, ranging from the family to the global political economy. This would involve power relations between the state and its citizens; between citizens as individuals as well as different social groups; and between institutions and citizens, in their individual or collective capacity – such as between business and labour. While much more conceptual analysis is needed to arrive at a proper formulation of a developmental approach to democracy, a preliminary conceptualization is attempted in Table 1.² It is drawn from recent debates on democracy, inclusion and social justice seen from the perspective of power relations (Young 1990; 2000).

² These ideas are articulated at greater length in Mukherjee Reed 2008.

Table 1. A Stylized Conceptualization of the Developmental Approach to Democracy

Goal	Social transformation towards more just and equitable power relations. Such relations exist at many levels such as (a) between states and individual citizens; (b) between collectivities, such as between men and women and between different socio-religious or socio-ethnic communities; and (c) between public and private entities.
Strategy	Creation of institutions and restructuring of existing institutions in order to engender more equitable power relations. The most critical issue here is to acknowledge the interconnectivity of institutions in the political, economic and social realms. Transformations in the different realms are mutually reinforcing and should be pursued simultaneously.
Agent	The primary agents are social actors, especially collective civil society actors. However, in order to be successful, they must build synergistic relations with other actors at the local, national, regional and international levels.
Tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A deliberative and participatory approach; • Mobilization of collective capacity; • Local development and decentralization; • Effective multilateralism, especially multilateralism ‘from below’, which allows local actors to link across borders with like-minded entities.

Source: Bhargava and Mukherjee Reed, 2009; Young, 1990; 2000.

A developmental approach to democracy should mean a gradual process of democratization of power relations at all levels, ranging from the family to the global political economy. This would involve power relations between the state and its citizens; between citizens, individuals as well as different social groups; and between institutions and citizens, in their individual or collective capacity – such as between business and labour.

Would such an approach be feasible in South Asia? Our preliminary hypothesis is that it would – if it were to draw on the existing strong tradition of democracy building, which takes the dimension of power relations and political implications seriously. This is most obvious in civil society movements, which have operated since the colonial era and continue to be active in contemporary transitions such as that of Nepal. Relevant examples include: the Right to Information (RTI) movement in India; the lawyers’ movement in Pakistan; the peace movements in Sri Lanka, led often by women; the environmental movements; and the various women’s movements in Bangladesh – ranging from those which attempt to secure rights for women workers

to those which aim for the consolidation of parliamentary democracy. In addition, a fairly broad consensus exists in the academic and policy community in South Asia that democracy and development are inseparable goals that both require power relations to be addressed seriously (Bhargava and Mukherjee Reed 2009).

Box 1. Democracy in South Asia

The Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (2007) provides a useful summary of the relevant features of democracy in South Asia:

- South Asians have transformed the idea of democracy by infusing it with new meanings;
- The experience of democracy in this region defies conventional notions of preconditions for and outcomes of democracy;
- Deviations from received models of democracy are often a source of strength
- In South Asia, political experience matters more in shaping peoples’ orientations to democracy than inherited identities such as religion and ethnicity.

Source: Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (2007)

2. Challenges to Democracy Building in South Asia

South Asia as a regional entity presents two challenges: the disparate levels of democracy and development *between* South Asian nations; and the disparities *within* South Asian nations. While there is widespread acceptance that democratic and developmental deficits should be addressed within individual nation states, there is much less acceptance of the idea that disparities between countries in such geographical proximity and with shared borders might jeopardize the prospects for democracy or development in each country.³ Ironically, it is only with the scourge of terrorism that this interconnectedness has become more visible.

Terrorism or, more broadly speaking, the *problematic of security* is undoubtedly a most significant and overarching challenge in South Asia at the moment. The security problematic in the region has many layers which in the recent past have become intermingled in complex ways. There are at least three sets of causal factors that contribute to this problematic. The first involves developmental deficits, which arise, in turn, out of institutional deficits (see below). The second involves the situation of minorities all over South Asia. The conflicts in Kashmir and Sri Lanka as well as other insurgencies inside India – and until recently in Nepal – are indicative of these tensions between states and minority populations. The third involves the effects of US foreign policy and democracy promotion projects and their symbiotic relationship with the global rise of extremist Islam.

A second set of challenges involves *incomplete democratic transitions* which result in the inadequate development of the institutions of formal democracy. This is evidenced primarily in Afghanistan, but also in the Maldives, Bhutan and Nepal, albeit to different degrees.

A third set of challenges involves the *failure of institutions to fulfil their democratic mandates*, such as the present state of the parliament in Pakistan, the functioning of judicial systems all over South Asia, abuse of power by state institutions, and so on.

A fourth critical challenge arises from the disparities in the nature of the South Asian democracies. India and Sri Lanka have ensured reasonable electoral democracy and a fair amount of political stability with a free press and an independent judiciary, but the transfer of power to the people has not been deep enough. The institutions of democracy that were meant to serve citizens have in many cases become instruments of misgovernance. Pakistan and Bangladesh have had a meandering path to democracy. Even during periods of formal democracy, the script is often determined by the armed forces. Nepal's experience with constitutional monarchy was not conducive to parliamentary democracy. In Bhutan and the Maldives, democracy is still in its infancy but current movements in Bhutan, the Maldives and Nepal have generated revolutionary aspirations. The challenge for the political leadership of these countries is to consolidate democratic gains through constitutional and institutional arrangements and to ensure that the legitimate interests of historically marginalized

South Asia as a regional entity presents two challenges: the disparate levels of democracy and development between South Asian nations; and the disparities within South Asian nations. While there is widespread acceptance that democratic and developmental deficits should be addressed within individual nation states, there is much less acceptance of the idea that disparities between countries in such geographical proximity and with shared borders might jeopardize the prospects for democracy or development in each country.

³ In our view, this is a hypothesis that needs to be tested through systematic research if a regional approach to democracy building is to be explored.

segments of the population are secured. Only then can the social, economic and political conditions that give rise to conflict be overcome. In Afghanistan, the forces of extremism, fundamentalism and terrorism are so strong that powerful members of the international community are engaged in a collective manner in promoting and ensuring sustainable democracy in a hostile environment.

The challenge for the political leadership of these countries is to consolidate democratic gains through constitutional and institutional arrangements and to ensure that the legitimate interests of historically marginalized segments of the population are secured. Only then can the social, economic and political conditions that give rise to conflict be overcome.

The fifth critical challenge to democracy in South Asia is the *pervasive failure of human development*. In fact, many of the challenges outlined above derive from developmental deficits, although a narrow view of development and development deficits will not assist democratic progress (see below).

The 2003 Human Development Report provided early warning of the malaise of development in South Asia (UNDP 2003). The report outlined that, at the current pace of development, it would take another 100 years to halve

the level of hunger in South Asia; 50 years to achieve universal primary education; 20 years to reduce by two-thirds the mortality rate among children under five; and 10 years to reduce by half the number of those living on less than USD 1 per day. Arguably, the situation has deteriorated since then, exacerbated by the financial crisis, the impasse in Pakistan and Afghanistan and the general impact of globalization on the region. In addition to poverty and low levels of human development, levels of inequality have reached unprecedented heights. This is evident even in India, the most mature and successful democracy in the region. Similarly, Nepal, which has one of the most vibrant civil society movements for democracy, remains constrained by serious deficits in substantive equality.

Most notably, significant inequality exists between men and women in terms of human development, and the gains from human development continue to be distributed unevenly between them. The 1995 Human Development Report demonstrated this clearly, while also moving beyond the usual indicators of longevity, literacy and income to reveal gender differences in terms of political and economic participation. A central finding in this regard was that even in countries with high levels of human development, gender differences remained significant. Most notably, in no country were women systematically included in decision-making processes, and in most countries their exclusion was systematic and pervasive.

A critical challenge to democracy in South Asia is the pervasive failure of human development.

The story only gets worse with other social groups, constituted along other categories of difference such as race, ethnicity and religion. Levels of educational attainment and income

remain significantly unequal between such social groups, as do levels of economic and political participation. The 2004 Human Development Report documents that hundreds of millions of people face participation exclusion – a composite of economic and political exclusion. It estimated that about 750 million people were subjected to economic exclusion and 832 million people to political exclusion in 2004 (UNDP 2004).

Stark examples of the unevenness of human development can be seen in countries with high levels of human development – in the form of the racial inequality evident in all components of the Human Development Index (HDI) – education, longevity and

health, and levels of income and political participation. According to the 2004 Human Development Report, two Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries, France and Germany, have not a single member of a minority ethnic group in their lower house of parliament. As Amartya Sen notes in *Development & Freedom*, black men in the inner cities of the United States have a much lower life expectancy than their white counterparts. In fact, their life expectancy is also likely to be well below that of the average male in Kerala, India, even though the human development index of the US is much higher than that of India (Sen 1999). However, while men in Kerala continue to enjoy one of the highest levels of human development in the developing world, a *Dalit* man in Kerala enjoys a much smaller share of the human development pie than his non-*Dalit* counterpart. Similarly, significant disparities exist between Hindus and Muslims in India in terms of levels of education, political participation and income. The 1999 South Asian Human Development Report noted that more than half of all Muslims in Indian cities were living below the poverty line in 1999.

More recent research, including India's 2001 Census, confirms that these trends have persisted. More generally, minority communities everywhere in South Asia continue to experience pervasive forms of economic and social exclusion and violations of human rights (Government of India 2001). The recent resurgence of various fundamentalisms in different parts of South Asia has only made matters worse. In Pakistan and Bangladesh, violence against minority communities has become routine, while in India the problematic ascendancy of *Hindutva* culminated in the tragic events in Gujarat in February 2003. India witnessed the resurgence of turbulent social conflict throughout 2006 over the issue of affirmative action (known as 'reservation' in Indian parlance), conflict that is likely to continue for the foreseeable future.

These realities pose complex challenges. On the one hand, there is the urgent need to address the significant human development deficits that are common to various social groups. On the other hand, there is a greater need to ensure that efforts to enhance human development do not create *new* patterns of exclusion or inequality. Thus, human development must specifically attempt to reverse these patterns of inequality. Just as feminists have shown the contradictions inherent in 'gender-neutral' social policy, our contemporary realities indicate the contradictions of strategies that are neutral to difference, especially in such diverse societies as South Asia. The South Asian reality allows us to question each of these claims. The contrast between India, where Muslims are a minority, and Bangladesh and Pakistan, where they are not, provides us with important insights into the structural aspects of human development. India illustrates the importance as well as the various contradictions of a secular liberal democracy in a post-colonial context. Looked at from the perspective of marginalized groups, the advantages of liberal secular democracy may not necessarily outweigh the inequalities in human development. The malaise of human development in Bangladesh and Pakistan, however, or the high levels of poverty among Indian Hindus, indicate that a simple majority status does not resolve the issue. It is obvious that similar social schisms characterize all South Asian societies and are important impediments to democracy building.

The recent resurgence of various fundamentalisms in different parts of South Asia has only made matters worse. In Pakistan and Bangladesh, violence against minority communities has become routine, while in India the problematic ascendancy of Hindutva culminated in the tragic events in Gujarat in February 2003. India witnessed the resurgence of turbulent social conflict throughout 2006 over the issue of affirmative action, known as 'reservation' in Indian parlance.

Table 2. Challenges Identified in EU Country Strategy Papers, 2007–13

Country	Challenges identified
Afghanistan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low absorption capacity of government institutions; • Inability of local-level institutions to realize the objectives of decentralization and democratization;
Bangladesh	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low absorption capacity of government institutions; • Low levels of state efficiency at democratizing power relations;
Bhutan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The process of democratization is nascent and faces severe impediments on two fronts: a problem with securing livelihoods and economic growth and a lack of local-level institutions that can facilitate decentralization and community-level development
India	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human development deficits and rising inequality across economic and social groupings, which prevent the emergence of substantive democracy;
Maldives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A newly emerging civil society, resulting in a paucity of social actors who can help democratize the process of development;
Nepal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low institutional capacity to manage sustainable development;
Pakistan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low level of political commitment to democratic processes; • Lack of clarity over the roles of social actors; • Low absorption capacity of government institutions;
Sri Lanka	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conflict, migration and displacement, which have destabilizing effects on civil society.

Source: Bhargava and Mukherjee Reed, 2009; Young, 1990; 2000.

These challenges manifest themselves in different ways in the different South Asian countries, presenting a complex picture to external actors such as the EU. While a detailed country-level analysis is beyond the scope of this paper, it is useful to look at the challenges identified by the EU in pursuing their assistance programmes in South Asia. This will help connect the general challenges of democracy building to the specific goal of pursuing a developmental approach to democracy.

3. The Experience of the European Union and its Relevance to Democracy Building in South Asia

Given these challenges, what can South Asia and the EU take from one another in terms of democracy building from a developmental perspective? Space does not permit a full analysis of factors behind the success of the EU, but some key factors are outlined below.

The first key point is the success of the EU in integrating states with disparate levels of democracy and development. A critical factor in this success is the relative levels of equality *within* those nations, which was brought about through universal access to education, health and social security. Central to this is a welfare state with appropriate redistributive policies. The current conjuncture requires the fulfilment of similar goals under fundamentally different political-economic conditions. The MDGs represent an effort to achieve this, albeit under the aegis of neoliberal states in the context of globalization. Despite its many strengths, the main weakness of this approach is its neglect of the political dimension of development. A second weakness is its almost

exclusively welfarist orientation, which reinforces its apolitical orientation. Amartya Sen has noted that it is necessary to make a distinction between *welfarist* and *agency-centred* approaches to development. Both have their role in defining an approach to social change, but development strategies – especially in cooperation and assistance programmes – appear to show better results when they use the latter rather than the former.

Unless some sort of basic social, economic and political equality in the substantive sense can be established *within* South Asian nations, building a regional entity will remain an elusive quest. As is emphasized above, however, achieving such equality is itself a political task which would perhaps be better approached within a developmental framework of democracy building.

While the EU experience highlights the critical importance of economic integration to regional peace and the stability and sustainability of democracy, the South Asian experience highlights that unless political relations are stabilized, economic and cultural ties cannot endure. Economic integration must be pursued, but it is unlikely to play a major role in democracy building in the short term. However, from the perspective of the developmental approach to democracy building, economic collaboration between entities that empower marginalized social groups can yield important results. As such, collaboration between small businesses, such as women-led productive sectors and alternative types of productive arrangements in the agrarian and manufacturing sectors, are important areas to explore. In this context, collaborative regional ventures should be considered to assist small, marginalized enterprises which struggle to access markets.

The current realities in South Asia suggest that alternative paradigms of governance and for the management of economic enterprise must be more actively pursued and better integrated with development policy. Such models, if planned appropriately, can contribute significantly to substantive democratization of power relations at every level. While the paradigms of social entrepreneurship and socially beneficial economic management appear to have come of age, there is much work to be done to scale up such efforts and integrate them systematically with the development processes. The financial crisis, the agrarian crises in South Asia and the crises of hunger, malnutrition and employment all suggest the need for such alternative paradigms. Several successful examples exist in South Asia: the National Rural Employment Guarantee (NREG) programme in India; the *Naya Krishi Andolan* in Bangladesh; Community Development Councils in Afghanistan are important examples. ‘Mainstreaming’ such alternatives into regional economic cooperation through the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) would make such cooperation more directly beneficial to disadvantaged communities. This could have far-reaching implications in that a stake in regional development and peace could be built ‘from below’ rather than being orchestrated ‘from above’.

The first key point is the success of the EU in integrating states with disparate levels of democracy and development. A critical factor in this success is the relative levels of equality within those nations, which was brought about through universal access to education, health and social security. Central to this is a welfare state with appropriate redistributive policies.

Amartya Sen has noted that it is necessary to make a distinction between welfarist and agency-centred approaches to development. Both have their role in defining an approach to social change, but development strategies – especially in cooperation and assistance programmes – appear to show better results when they use the latter rather than the former.

Table 3. EU Strategy for the SAARC region and the prospects for developmental democracy

Country	Strategies identified in the EU most relevant to developmental democracy	Additional recommendations
Afghanistan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decentralization of development planning • Multilateral trust funds • Alternative livelihoods 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthening the capacity of local universities with curricular programmes in social sciences, emphasizing issues of democratic development as well as the technical and practical aspects of planning
Bangladesh	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human and social development • Economic and trade development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As the strategy paper correctly observes, there is a problem of low absorption capacity for development cooperation. This can only be addressed by mobilizing civil society actors who are involved in comprehensive social change. • Regional connections may also facilitate this process
Bhutan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raising productivity in agriculture through technical development • Improving rural incomes • Renewable Natural Resources programmes, especially those that build the capacity of farmers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthening the capacity of local universities with curricular programmes in social sciences, emphasizing issues of democratic development as well as the technical and practical aspects of planning
India	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The extensive discussion highlights that the EU is rightly focused on meeting the substantial MDG deficits that exist in India despite its high economic growth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is missing in the EU approach are strategies that draw systematically on collective civil society actors that are also seeking the same goals. Many of these movements are attempting to go beyond simple 'target chasing' to address deeper structural inequalities. There is much potential for concretizing a developmental approach to democracy building • India can take the leadership in the building of local capacity in university and development-related education, although problems of dominance need to be avoided
The Maldives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Democratization and good governance • Sustainable livelihood strategies based on local resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Democratization and good governance is not currently a focal area for the EU. This might need rethinking • Strengthening the capacity of local universities with curricular programmes in social sciences, emphasizing issues of democratic development as well as the technical and practical aspects of planning • The gap in civil society identified in the EU strategy paper could be addressed through the development of secondary and post-secondary education
Nepal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education • Stability and peace-building • Trade 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthening the capacity of local universities with curricular programmes in social sciences, emphasizing issues of democratic development as well as the technical and practical aspects of planning

Pakistan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Devolution and decentralization • Local development • Building political commitment • Health and education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building on the initiative for higher education reform • Building strategic alliances with active civil society movements (rather than individual NGOs) • Promoting commitment to regional cooperation and peace
Sri Lanka	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrated district development in the north-east with active involvement of local communities • Development through trade • Confidence-building measures at the community level 	

Source: EU country strategy papers for the SAARC countries, 2007–13

As is discussed above, a developmental approach to democracy building requires the construction and reconstruction of institutions to engender more equitable power relations. This task requires the mobilization of extant civil society, however nascent and unstable, in the project of democracy building itself. In turn, this requires a focus from the very beginning on the local level, where civil society actors can be most active. It also requires a focus on the economic and political processes that are the most inclusive and the least marginalizing. Within this framework, development assistance needs to be assessed from this perspective. Our examination of the EU country papers for SAARC member states identified several appropriate strategies that could be explored further. What could perhaps be strengthened is the articulation of an overall approach or framework within which the different elements and their synergies can best be harnessed. Table 3 offers brief reflections on the EU strategies that could potentially be exploited for democracy building.

In addition to various country-specific strategies, certain common strategies may be applicable to all countries: first, the promotion of more democratic economic management; and, second, the development of the university sector. While primary education is pursued as part of the MDGs, there is less emphasis on secondary, post-secondary and professional education. This leads to a contradictory process where the training of development professionals takes place outside the local, national and regional context and without any organic connection to the latter. This process can be reversed only by systematically strengthening the local university sector and building organic linkages with local social actors in order to foster a repository of local knowledge and expertise. Critical to this endeavour is the production of knowledge that goes beyond academia and is able to connect academic and practical knowledge relevant to local development. India could establish leadership in this area, although hegemony issues would have to be carefully avoided, and it could be pursued within a regional framework. The South Asia University could be a starting point, provided that it were to consciously adopt a developmental perspective. India's recent Knowledge Commission could also provide some useful insights (Government of India: 2007).

4. Conclusions and Summary of Recommendations

By most estimations, South Asia has a good record of democracy. The recent transitions in Nepal, Pakistan and the Maldives are important illustrations of the democratic impetus

in the region. However, the consolidation and sustainability of these democracies remains an issue and, it is argued, are challenged by the high levels of inequality that currently characterize the region. There is a major contradiction in the development of democracy in South Asia. On the one hand, the robustness of civil society and various civil society movements has transformed and expanded the practice of democracy well beyond what established institutions allow for. On the other hand, equality and justice, particularly forms of social justice, are denied to the majority of its citizens.

Based on these observations, exploration of a developmental approach to democracy building, in the sense of the democratization of power relations alluded to above, seems

feasible. This process must be built from the local level, and through the democratization of economic, political and social structures. Strategies at both the regional and the national levels will be necessary, emphasizing, to the extent possible, the local and community levels and maximizing synergies between these levels. Partnership with the EU could play a valuable role.

The South Asian context and the challenges of democracy in South Asia have much to contribute to a developmental approach to democracy. Our main arguments and recommendations are summarized below:

There is a major contradiction in the development of democracy in South Asia. On the one hand, the robustness of civil society and various civil society movements has transformed and expanded the practice of democracy well beyond what established institutions allow for. On the other hand, equality and justice, particularly forms of social justice, are denied to the majority of its citizens.

1. The EU should explore a developmental approach to democracy that goes beyond formal democracy and governance in the narrow sense, taking a deeper, more comprehensive view that sees democracy as the emergence of more equitable power relations between states and citizens, as well as between groups of citizens. Such an approach has begun to be articulated in several documents. These ideas can be further enhanced by linking them to the principles of accountability, representativeness, legitimacy and equity, which are expressed in several EU deliberations.
2. The main challenge for democracy in South Asia is the contradiction between the ever-increasing robustness of its civil society and the deep inequities and developmental deficits that prevent the majority of this civil society from effective democratic participation and inclusion.
3. This suggests an approach to harness the collective power of civil society groups to address democratic and developmental deficits: the former being deficits in accountability, representativeness and legitimacy and the latter concerning social and economic inequality.
4. This requires a shift in perspective to understand how change occurs, and in particular the role of development cooperation or assistance in such change. The change from a welfarist to an agency perspective is yet to be 'mainstreamed' but is likely to find great resonance in South Asia. The challenge is to find the correct balance
5. In concrete strategic terms, this implies building alliances with local social actors who are engaged in projects of democracy and development – specifically those that seek long-term change rather than discrete, short-term goals. Ideally, these alliances

should be built in ways that connect the local, national, regional and international levels.

6. Important lessons can be derived from the success of the EU in integrating states with disparate levels of democracy and development. A critical lesson derives from the relative equality within the nation-states, brought about through universal access to education, health and social security, central to which was a welfare state with appropriate distributive policies. The MDGs neglect the political dimension of development and have an almost exclusively welfarist orientation. This can be corrected within a framework of developmental democracy.
7. The EU country strategy papers for the SAARC member states are a useful starting point. This paper offers some reflections on these strategies and their compatibility with a developmental approach to democracy.
8. Building local capacity in secondary and post-secondary education, in particular strengthening local universities by enhancing their academic capacity as well as their technical and practical capacity in development planning, would require building organic connections between the university sector and other local social actors.
9. Finally, the EU should more actively pursue alternative paradigms of governance and management of economic enterprise. Such models, if planned appropriately, could contribute significantly to the substantive democratization of power relations at every level. The paradigms of social entrepreneurship and socially beneficial economic management appear to have come of age, but much work is needed to scale up such efforts and integrate them systematically with development processes.

References

- Bhargava, R. (ed.), *Secularism and its Critics* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998)
- Bhargava, K.K. and A. Mukherjee Reed, "The European Union, South Asia and Democracy in Development: Dialogue and Partnership", International IDEA, 2009
- Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, *The State of Democracy in South Asia* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2007)
- European Union, Strategy Papers for the SAARC Countries, 2007–13, available at http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/saarc/index_en.htm
- Government of India (Justice Rajendra Sachar, Chairman), *Social, Economic and Educational Status of the Muslim Community of India: A Report*, Prime Minister's High-level Committee, Cabinet Secretariat, Government of India, New Delhi, 2006
- Government of India, National Knowledge Commission *Report to the Nation 2007*, New Delhi, India, 2007, available at <http://www.knowledgecommission.gov>
- Gupwell, D., 'South Asia and the European Union: How have these Regions Evolved and what are the Prospects for Cooperation between the EU and SAARC, 2007–2015', unpublished mimeo

- Haq, M. *Reflections on Human Development* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997)
- International IDEA, 'Challenges to Democracy Building: Recommendations for a New Swedish Policy on Democracy Building', available at <http://www.idea.int/publications/challenges_to_democracy_building/index.cfm>
- International IDEA, 'Supporting Democracy: Highlighting the Political Dimension of International Development Cooperation', Opening address by Swedish Minister for Development Cooperation, available at <http://www.idea.int/publications/challenges_to_democracy_building/upload/Challenges-Report-Web-2.pdf>, accessed February 2009
- Mukherjee Reed, A., *Human Development and Social Power: Perspectives from South Asia* (London and New York: Routledge, 2008)
- Nussbaum, M.C. *Women and Human Development: The Capabilities Approach* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000)
- Sen, A.K. *Development as Freedom* (New York: Knopf, 1999)
- United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), *1995 Human Development Report: Gender and Human Development* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995)
- UNDP, *2003 Human Development Report: Millennium Development Goals, a Compact Among Nations to End Human Poverty* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003)
- UNDP, *2004 Human Development Report: Cultural Liberty in Today's Diverse World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004)
- UNDP, *South Asia Human Development Reports* (Karachi and Oxford: Oxford University Press, various years)
- United Kingdom Department for International Development (DFID), *Governance, Development and Democratic Politics: DFID's Work in Building more Effective States* (London: UK DFID, 2007), available at <<http://www.dfid.gov.uk/pubs/files/governance.pdf>>
- Wilton Park, Report of the conference 'The European Approach to Democracy Support', Wilton Park, UK, 30 March to 1 April 2007, available at <<http://www.wiltonpark.org.uk/documents/conferences/WPS07-4/pdfs/WPS07-4.pdf>>
- Young, I. M., *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1990)
- Young, I. M., *Inclusion and Democracy* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2000)
- Youngs, R., *The European Union and the Promotion of Democracy: Europe's Mediterranean and Asian Policies* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2002)

About the Authors

Dr Ananya Mukherjee Reed is Associate Professor of Political Science and Development Studies at York University in Toronto, Canada. She is also founding-director of the International Secretariat for Human Development (ISHD) as well as the current

director of the South Asian Studies program at York. Her most recent book is *Human Development and Social Power: Perspectives from South Asia* (Routledge, London and New York: 2008).

Professor Kant K. Bhargava is a Fellow at the Centre for the Study of Democracy, Queen's University, Kingston, Canada, and an International Adviser at the South Asian Centre for Policy Studies. He was formerly the Secretary General of SAARC.